



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.  
Founding President

# Florida Southern Christian Leadership Conference State Unit

**Chairman**  
Art Rocker, Sr.  
kingart43@aol.com  
850-450-1982 cell



**President**  
Rev. Henry Marion Steele  
hsteel60@yahoo.com  
1-850-385-2233

6919 Pensacola Boulevard, Pensacola, Florida 32505 • 850.944.4900

[www.sclcf.org](http://www.sclcf.org)



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## Meeting with State Attorney William Eddins, First Judicial Circuit

November 18, 2009 at 9:30 AM

SCLC Florida and thirty plus concerned citizens met with the State Attorney Wednesday morning. We were not all able to speak with the state attorney in his office due to the fact he only had room for six people. However, he came to his reception area lobby and spoke with all the concerned citizens after meeting with several in his private conference room. Attorney Eddins entertained all the questions that were asked and requested that his Assistant State Attorney speak with the people and develop an ongoing dialogue if needed. There were a number of concerned citizens that had taken issue with young people being incarcerated without having proper legal representation, as is the case with so many that are going to jail in this community. Attorney Eddins expressed a desire to investigate any cases where he felt an inequity in the legal process had occurred. Also, we learned that the FDLE, according to Mr. Eddins, is an investigating body and the Director of FDLE is appointed by the Governor.

The letter that is attached is the question that SCLC Florida discussed regarding the Victor Steen case and the 9 mm gun that was alleged to be in his possession.

Mr. Eddins emphatically stated that FDLE has not indicated anything about a gun in the possession of Victor Steen. He went on to say that the FDLE is not familiar with anything related to the leaking of any information about a gun and has not released a statement relevant to a gun in this case. The only thing that the state attorney's office *is* familiar with concerning the issue of a gun is that a private source made the statement that Victor Steen had a gun, not FDLE. He also indicated that a news reporter had called his office discussing a gun that was alleged to be on Victor Steen, and he stated that the FDLE has not under any circumstances leaked out any information related to a gun. The media have propagated these allegations, not the FDLE. He stated that he would be releasing results of the Victor Steen investigation once the investigation has been completed. Mr. Eddins stated that this investigation is a slow but thorough process.

I asked Mr. Eddins when he thinks the investigation would be over.

Though he was unable to give a definite timeline, Mr. Eddins stated that this case has garnered a lot of interest from the public. Once again, it is a slow process and he is welcoming any others that might have comments related to this investigation.

We asked if we could make an appeal for him to investigate the case of Victor Steen.

Mr. Eddins stated that he took over the investigation from the PPD very quickly after the incident occurred with Victor Steen. He immediately requested that the FDLE investigate the case and thereby took the case from the PPD. He stated that the reason that the body of Victor Steen laid in

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the area for several hours was because that was simply the protocol to follow, as they were doing a thorough investigation.

The SCLC of Florida asked if he would investigate Jerald Ard and prosecute him in the event that investigation results deem that he was at fault.

Mr. Eddins stated he has no problem prosecuting law enforcers if there is wrong doing involved. As a matter of fact, he mentioned that, recently, he had prosecuted the Sheriff in Okaloosa County and other law enforcement officers in the past. "I will do the same here if the investigation determines that to be the case in the Victor Steen tragedy," he stated.

In closing he stated that in the event that there are witnesses to this incident who haven't come forward, to please send them to his office and he would continue to investigate this matter. He also stated that all the final decisions in this case rested with him.

He indicated that in the event we do not like what occurred with his investigation we can still get remediation from other agencies. He spoke of the King case in which the young kid was beaten by the guards in Panama City, Florida. He stated that the federal government has even broader laws and the DOJ can find others laws that affect a case. Therefore we can decide on these matters once the investigation is over and we have served the interests of the public in the matter of Victor Steen.

He thanked the group for coming and would continue to have his staff to engage in a dialogue with any citizens concerning any legal issues that might affect the community's interests.

Art Rocker, Chairman

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