

**IN THE SUPREME COURT OF FLORIDA**

ORANGE COUNTY, FLORIDA,

Petitioner,

v.

CASE NO. SC18-79  
LT Case Nos.: 5D16-2509  
5D16-2511

RICK SINGH, individually, et al.,

Respondents.

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**ANSWER BRIEF ON JURISDICTION**

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## **PREFACE**

This is the Answer Brief on Jurisdiction of Respondent, Bill Cowles, Orange County Supervisor of Elections, hereinafter referred to as “Supervisor of Elections” or simply “Supervisor.” Because the Supervisor was neutral as to all substantive issues argued below, a stance maintained before both the Fifth District Court of Appeal and in briefing to this Court, this Answer Brief on Jurisdiction should not be deemed primary but instead a response supplementing those briefs previously or contemporaneously filed, limited in response to the extent that the Supervisor’s role is involved.

The abbreviations and notations included within the Brief on Jurisdiction filed by the Petitioner, Orange County, Florida, will be utilized in this brief as well for purposes of consistency. Accordingly, Petitioner, Orange County, Florida, will be referred to herein as “Orange County.” Respondent, Bill Cowles, Orange County Supervisor of Elections, will be referred to herein as “Supervisor.”

## **SUMMARY OF THE RESPONSE**

This brief is not intended as an “argument;” the Supervisor of Elections maintains a neutral position regarding the jurisdictional issue before this Court. The duties of the Supervisor require him and his office to ministerially administrate elections in Orange County, complying to the highest extent possible with existing federal, state, and local laws pertaining to those elections. This administration works best when (1) changes to the status quo are minimized; and (2) related litigation is resolved as far in advance of an election as possible. The Supervisor supports each of these principles, but takes no official position regarding either Petitioner’s jurisdictional request or the underlying litigation.

**RESPONSE OF BILL COWLES,  
ORANGE COUNTY SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS**

As Supervisor of Elections, Bill Cowles is a constitutional officer required to comply with federal, state, and local law, including the provisions of the Florida Election Code as well as the provisions of the Orange County Charter, to the extent that they do not conflict with federal or state law. It is the longstanding position of the Supervisor that, as an impartial elections administrator, he is adverse to taking a position for or against any specific election issues raised, but instead seeks only to properly administer his duties as required for the purposes of elections held within Orange County.

The jurisdictional arguments raised by Orange County concern electoral issues that may bear directly upon future ballot issues. Accordingly, the Supervisor remains neutral regarding those issues and does not take a position on the issue directly before this tribunal: whether or not exercise of discretionary jurisdiction is prudent or warranted regarding the arguments raised. The Supervisor's response is instead intended solely to preserve the opportunity to provide any factual content necessary for the Court should the matter proceed beyond the jurisdictional stage of the briefing pursuant to Rule 9.120(f), Fla. R. App. P. Moreover, because the matter at issue has the potential to affect the status quo concerning the administration of electoral contests to be decided in Orange

County, the Supervisor further responds not to espouse either potential outcome but to instead request that the disposition be reached as quickly and prudently possible within the confines of the decision-making process of this Court.

## CONCLUSION

Consistent with the neutrality expressed throughout this response, the Supervisor of Elections urges only that a disposition of this appeal, pro or con, be rendered with sufficient time to allow for necessary implementation in advance of future elections.

Respectfully submitted,

*/s/ Nicholas A. Shannin*

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## CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on February 7, 2018, I electronically filed the foregoing with the Clerk of the Courts by using the Florida Courts eFiling Portal which will send a notice of electronic filing to the following:

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**CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE**

Pursuant to Fla. R. App. P. 9.210(a)(2), I hereby certify that this brief was prepared using proportionately spaced Times New Roman 14 point font.

*/s/ Nicholas A. Shannin*  
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