



OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF • ST. LANDRY PARISH

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From the Desk of Sheriff Bobby J. Guidroz
Re: Clay Higgins' Departure from the St. Landry Parish Sheriff's Department
Date: March, 2016

Thank you for your concern and/or interest with regards to this matter. I have received phone calls, letters and e-mails regarding Higgins' voluntary departure from the St. Landry Parish Sheriff Department. This gives me the opportunity to set the record straight once and for all. The following message is lengthy but I ask you to read it in its entirety so that you may know all the facts and particulars regarding Higgins' departure from the St. Landry Parish Sheriff's Department. Most civilians don't appreciate that law-enforcement leaders and agencies in Louisiana and all across America **must** maintain discipline among its ranks to be successful.

Now Allow Me to Set the Record Straight!

Many people believe what they see and hear in the news and on various social media networks as being accurate. It has become apparent to me after reading posts on Facebook, talking to people on the telephone, and answering e-mails and letters that most people are misinformed and don't know the facts and truth behind Clay Higgins' surprise and voluntary resignation.

I did **not** tell Higgins to '**tone down**' his message with reference to his comments on the Gremlins Gang video. Clay Higgins was told to '**tone down**' his harsh and disparaging language with reference to our weekly crime stoppers message **weeks** before the Gremlins video was ever produced and aired on television. The St. Landry Parish Crime Stoppers board attorney Robert Brinkman and board chairperson Stephanie Johnson told Higgins on numerous occasions to '**tone down**' his remarks on the weekly crime stoppers program long before the Gremlins video. I called Higgins in and told him to 'tone down' his unnecessary and disparaging remarks about individuals on our weekly crime stoppers program in late 2015.

This is not what Higgins said on the Gremlins Video! I told him to tone down the following things he was saying on our weekly crime stoppers program. This is what I ordered him to **'tone down'**;

- ***'You are a pathetic bum'***;
- ***'Sagging his pants like a punk'***;
- ***'Activate your dope fried brain cells'***;
- ***'You are a couple of heathens, no good for yourself or anybody else'***;
- ***'You like a disease, a parasite, a cancer you have nothing to offer the world and you are bound for hell'***;
- ***'Low life'***;
- ***'You are not worth the expense of a bullet'***;
- ***'Imbecile, with limited brain cells'***;
- ***'You fools didn't do well in school'***;

It is apparent that many people on Facebook and other social media sites believe that I should have allowed Higgins to do and say anything he wanted on our weekly crime stoppers program. They believe there would be no repercussions from the disparaging remarks Higgins was making about people. I was told by two (2) attorneys that the remarks being made on our crime stoppers weekly program about others would certainly be a liability not only for the department, but for me as well! I did what any responsible public official would have done and that was to have him to 'tone it down.'

Unfortunately, Higgins felt the public, Facebook readers, and the media should believe his version of events which seemingly, in the critics' mind, gives his reason for resigning some credibility. ***(Higgins' given reason for resigning from the St. Landry Parish Sheriff Department was because 'he felt conflicted' and didn't want to 'work with a bit in his mouth and be reined in'. He wanted you to believe his resignation was because I didn't like what he said on the Gremlins video.)*** Higgins said in his press conference 15 minutes after he resigned, that he could not do what the sheriff asked him to do! When the reporters at his press conference asked him to explain what was it the sheriff wanted you to do and you couldn't...he said, ***"I feel conflicted and cannot do anything that goes against my principles."*** ***Higgins did not want to be told what he could say and not say, as the St. Landry Parish Crime Stoppers host and department spokesperson.***

Higgins saw a need to convince the public through Facebook, his departing press conference, and now his video ride along messages that his reasons for

resigning from the Sheriff's Department somehow conflicted with his personal beliefs and convictions.

I have been in law-enforcement for forty-two (42) plus years. I learned that one of the major cornerstones to having an effective law-enforcement agency is ***discipline***. The law-enforcement profession is a quasi-military organization where discipline must exist, be enforced and maintained in order to function effectively. If a law-enforcement agency is not disciplined, then we would have officers physically and verbally abusing people and doing their job without regard for human life or dignity. Can you imagine having undisciplined deputies armed with guns, mace, pepper spray, Tasers, and other weapons? I can't! If I allowed my employees, all 210 of them to act in an undisciplined manner, I would not be an effective leader! *I firmly believe that an organization that is disciplined will be successful! And an organization that is not disciplined will struggle to become successful and likely fail!*

Secondary Employment and Policies and Procedure

Every commissioned deputy, corrections deputies, and civilians hired by me is given a copy of our policies and procedures. Clay Higgins signed for his copy of our 1st edition policies and procedures manual when he was hired in November of 2011, and he signed again for the updated third edition in December 2013. Clay Higgins was aware of his limitations and responsibilities the Sheriff's spokesperson.

Sometime in the fall or early winter of 2015 Clay Higgins came into my office and asked for approval to do a television commercial for a Lafayette company, Acadian Total Security. I said **YES**. However, I instructed Higgins to review the department policy (SPCC Policy # 2201 A-1 & 2) & (SPCC Policy # 2214) and come back with his '*Outside Secondary Employment Request*', and let me review it to make sure that we were within the guidelines of the department policies and procedures.

(The outside secondary employment request form when completed gives detailed information to the Sheriff regarding the duties, requirements, and scope of the outside secondary employment. The Sheriff needs complete and specific information listed on the secondary request form so that he can ensure that no prohibited activities such as utilizing the St. Landry Parish Sheriff Office time, facilities, equipment, supplies, uniforms, etc., is used in the outside secondary employment.)

I didn't receive an **outside secondary request** from Higgins for the Acadian Total Security commercial. St. Landry Parish Sheriff's office attorney, Chad Pitre came into my office and asked if I had seen the television commercial with Clay Higgins in uniform and our department marked patrol car in the commercial. I responded that I had not. I advised Mr. Pitre that Higgins was instructed to complete an outside secondary employment form and get it back to me.

Mr. Pitre advised me to tell Higgins he cannot use his department unit or uniform to do any commercials for private companies. I immediately called Higgins in and told him the department attorney suggested he not use our department uniform, badge, or unit to film any commercial. Higgins stated he had already taped the commercial and it was currently airing on television. I instructed Higgins **NOT** to use our patrol unit or department uniform to do **any more** commercials. Additionally, I stated to Higgins the commercial utilizing our department vehicle and his appearance in full dress uniform would have to be removed from the air waves. Higgins expressed his concerns that Robert Bertrand, the security company owner would be calling me complaining.

Later, Higgins sends an e-mail to me stating, "*Sheriff, sir I am forwarding the e-mail I sent to Robert Bertrand after you and I had the conversation and I told him you wanted to make adjustments.*"

The next day or so Acadian Total Security owner, Robert Bertrand called and asked if he could come see me regarding the aforementioned commercial involving Clay Higgins. Robert came to my office to discuss my decision regarding Higgins using my department uniform, badge and police unit for his commercials. I denied Robert's persistent request to allow Higgins to film any more company commercials in uniform with the parish owned fully marked Chevrolet Tahoe. The next Acadian Total Security commercial on T.V. showed Higgins wearing his personal gray cowboy hat and his ward constable badge that was pinned on his gray shirt and not a sheriff badge. ***There was no sheriff department unit or uniform in the commercial.*** I make these points not to embarrass Clay Higgins but to point out what became a growing undertone of insubordination and lack of discipline on Higgins' part.

If my memory serves me correctly, Higgins said on Facebook and/or on one of his ride along videos that he was never told he had to stop wearing his uniform and couldn't have his unit in the Acadian Total Security commercials. My question to him would be, "Why did you stop appearing in uniform in the commercial?"

The nature of law enforcement employment requires sheriff's office personnel to have the ability to work irregular duty schedules that are subject to change on short notice. Such flexibility is necessary to provide proper service and protection to the people of St. Landry Parish. It is also necessary for the applicant to have adequate rest so they are alert and proficient during their tour of duty. Outside secondary employment may also create a conflict of interest with the deputy's primary responsibility to the sheriff's office, especially if that employee is a member of the sheriff's S.W.A.T team. All S.W.A.T members are subject to call out at any time day or night. It is therefore necessary for the sheriff to review a deputy's potential outside employment duties and application to make sure all policies, and laws are adhered to with regards to the outside employment. The necessity may also arise to prohibit certain off-duty/outside employment should the best interest and welfare of the sheriff's office, the deputy, or the community be at stake. That is why the sheriff needs the completed outside employment application form from **EVERY** employee seeking outside secondary employment!

Efforts to raise money for Higgins' Homeless Shelter Project

In the early summer of 2015 I was at the Holiday Inn in Henderson attending a Texas/Louisiana fishing rodeo lunch and reception with my friends from the fishing rodeo group. Higgins called me and stated he would like to meet with me. Higgins told me he needed to raise money for a homeless shelter project and he wanted to know if he could sell coffee mugs, t-shirts and other items with his name on it. *I said he could as long as he did not use his 'Badge of Office', which is described in our department policy as, 'the department identification, commission card, badge, official position, title and uniform'. I did say he could use his name, Clay Glenn Higgins, but NOT Captain Higgins!*

I instructed Higgins to fill out an **outside secondary employment** form and get it back to me so I could review the particulars of the business. Neither myself, nor my administrative assistant ever saw the secondary employment form.

The Covenant Magazine Interview

As a former state trooper, I served as a spokesperson for the Louisiana State Police serving as a public information officer. I always had to get supervisor approval before doing any news interviews whether it was newspaper, radio or television interview. I was not allowed to do an interview with any magazine due to the fact they are **NOT a news media outlet that law-enforcement agencies use to disseminate information to the public!**

As long as Clay Higgins has been the St. Landry Parish Public Information Officer he and/or his clerical assistant were required to e-mail all press releases to all media outlets after my review and approval. **NOT ONE TIME** has Clay Higgins or his clerical assistant e-mailed, faxed or mailed a press release to the Covenant magazine or any magazine reporter! Why not? Because the Covenant magazine is not nor ever was a news media outlet and he had no reason to send them a press release! He owes the public an explanation to his statement regarding the Covenant magazine as being a media outlet and the reason he did the Covenant magazine interview... and without permission from the sheriff! It is obvious to me that Higgins, while employed as the public information officer for the St. Landry Parish Sheriff's Office did the Covenant magazine interview for personal reasons.

The St. Landry Parish Sheriff Department has guidelines restricting interviews with non- media outlets for very good reasons. If Higgins would have asked he would have gotten approval to do the interview on his **personal time, without department uniform unit and badge of office.**

I am a devout Catholic. My wife and my entire family attend Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church in Opelousas every Sunday. We have three (3) children and nine (9) grandchildren that attend mass with us. Don't let anyone tell you that his interview with the Covenant magazine upset me because of my non-belief or any other reason. What is disturbing to me was that:

- *He did an interview with a magazine that is NOT a media outlet about his personal life and redemption and not a news dissemination effort, and using his department uniform, badge of office and department rank.*
- *He did the interview without getting permission from me to do it! But he told citizens in his 'ride along video' interview and on Facebook that he did the Covenant interview because they are a 'media outlet' and that was his job to do interviews with the media.*
- *He continued to operate outside the guidelines I have set, not just for him, but for all Sheriff's department personnel.*

Gremlins Gang Video and Crime Stoppers

What you must know and understand is the Gremlins Gang was *not* posing a problem for citizens in St. Landry Parish. They were not operating in St. Landry Parish. I publicly agreed the Gremlins Gang was a dangerous group of criminals that committed murders, robberies, theft, drug dealings, and witness intimidation. The Gremlins Gang did exist, **but not in St. Landry Parish.** The Gremlins Gang's

presence and criminal activity was occurring in Vermillion Parish 35-40 miles south of St. Landry Parish! My office was asked to moderate the video for the Vermillion Parish Sheriff because of our broad base of support and viewership on our weekly crime stoppers program. Higgins asked me if he could moderate the video and **I gave him the authority to do so.**

Higgins presented false statements to the public, in his departing press conference, and on Facebook about me reining him in. Higgins had the public believing that I told him to ‘tone it down’ because of his comments on the Gremlins Gang Video. He led you to believe the ACLU was putting or had put **political pressure** on me because of his video comments. The ACLU nor did anyone else call me about the comments made by Higgins on the Gremlins video. Higgins wanted you to believe I was intimidated by the ACLU! He actually wanted the public to believe that the ACLU and politics made me bow to political pressure! Many on Facebook, Twitter and social media outlets fell for it! Clay Higgins has had plenty of time and opportunity to correct his false and misleading antics. **He intentionally deceived the public via Facebook, his departing press conference, and continues to deceive the public in his ride along videos regarding my orders to him.**

Clay Higgins requested permission to remove his sheriff unit decals requested an additional semi-automatic rifle and additional body armor for his home!

Three (3) weeks after Higgins publicly called out the Gremlins Gang, Higgins came into my office stating he felt threatened and was afraid for him and his family’s safety. In the Gremlins Gang video, Higgins made comments that invited some dangerous criminals to a ‘fight’ or confrontation. He further stated he just bought a little house (***undisclosed location***), and he was concerned ‘those criminals’ would find where he lives. He was afraid the sheriff decals on his unit would give him away. Higgins asked me to allow him to remove the marked decals from his marked patrol car so it would not be recognized as a police unit while parked at his residence. My question is “What about the many, 65 to be exact, dedicated, loyal, and trusted deputies that do have a fully marked unit and wear the St. Landry Parish uniform?” They are still patrolling in a fully marked patrol unit and they park their individually assigned units in front of their homes!

Additionally, Higgins asked my department firearms instructor Major Eddie Thibodeaux for another semi-automatic rifle to keep in his home, and additional body armor for his home. His request for additional body armor and his request for another assault rifle for his home were denied. I stated to him, ***“I will allow you to remove the sheriff decals from your sheriff unit because you fear for your life!”***

There is nothing courageous or righteous in calling out criminals and then retreating, only to leave others exposed to a danger that did not exist until it was created for personal exposure!

Free air time for Public Service Announcement

I would like to say thank you to TV 3 for giving the St. Landry Parish Sheriff Department and the St. Landry Parish Crime Stoppers board the free air time for our weekly program. We were asked since its inception to keep our comments between 90 and 120 seconds!)

First Problem

KATC-TV 3 the host television station for our crime stoppers program expressed concern about Higgins' excessive time to produce our weekly 90 second crime stoppers program. Higgins was taking three (3) minutes and sometimes longer to do a free public service announcement. The more time Higgins took to complete our weekly crime stoppers message the less money KATC was able to earn by selling air time for commercials. The crime stoppers segment operates at the mercy of the television producers at KATC. We **CANNOT** take all the time we want for a **FREE** public service announcement. The television station management was running out of patience with our lack of compliance with their public service announcement requirements.

Second Problem

I was getting phone calls and criticism from people that thought the weekly message went overboard and we strayed from our original message intent and design. Many people stated we should not be in the entertainment business and I agreed.

Third Problem

In the late summer, or early fall of 2015, St. Landry Parish Sheriff's attorney Chad Pitre told me to have Clay Higgins '**tone down**' his message and have him to quit making disparaging remarks about people's intelligence or lack thereof. Mr. Pitre stated those kind of remarks can present the sheriff and the sheriff department some serious liability issues.

Fourth Problem

In the late summer early fall of 2015, St. Landry Parish Crime Stoppers board attorney, retired Judge Bob Brinkman told me on more than one occasion to have Higgins tone down his remarks and to stay on point with the program. The St. Landry Crime Stoppers board president, Stephanie Johnson came to my office on two occasions asking me to have Clay Higgins '**tone down**' his negative comments on the weekly crime stoppers program and that was in the fall of 2015 long **before the Gremlins Gang Video**. Additionally, Ms. Johnson told me

Higgins was using too much time on the weekly message and she needed me to talk to him about that.

Imagine if your son, daughter, grandchild or close relative were the subject or a suspect of a featured crime stoppers crime of the week video. I hardly think you would agree that saying they were *uniquely stupid, or had no brain cells, or were not worth the expense of a bullet* would be a fitting description of him or her.

I reined Higgins in knowing there would be resistance. Clay Higgins would still have a job in my department if he had chosen to stay on point, **follow orders, follow instructions from the crime stoppers board and follow department policy**. His surprise departure and unemployment status is his undoing, **NOT MINE!**

I don't know of a Sheriff, Chief of Police, City Marshall or *any person with a business* that would allow their spokesperson or any of their employees to say what they want, unbridled and without a *'bit' in their mouth!* I don't think any *business person* would allow their employee(s) to say disparaging remarks about the public or to go unbridled without a *'bit' in their mouth and be allowed to say anything they want to say about their company!*

Ten years ago when I first ran for sheriff, I campaigned on the promise that I would bring the St. Landry Parish Sheriff Department to a higher standard in terms of professionalism. My campaign slogan was and still is, *"Committed to a Higher Standard."*

As Sheriff, it is my duty and responsibility that the message(s) coming from my department and going out to the public be professional, on point and truthful! If Clay Higgins cannot agree with and follow my directives, instructions, professional standards, policies and procedures and the crime stoppers program guidelines, then he is correct in resigning his position as Public Information Officer for the St. Landry Parish Sheriff.

Facebook and social media critics don't understand the decisions I make as sheriff are **not** always *'politically correct.'* Maybe they did not see my explanation and interviews on television, print, radio and on Facebook...or maybe they didn't care what I had to say about the matter.

I started in this profession at the age of 18. I am a graduate of the Louisiana State Police Academy, F.B.I. National Academy, Federal Law-Enforcement Under Cover Training Center, and twenty-eight years as a La. State Trooper. I can talk the

talk because I have walked the walk! I worked in the trenches as a shift Lieutenant in the Patrol, Traffic, Criminal Investigative Division, supervisor in the Bureau of Investigations, supervisor in the Public Information Section, and supervisor in other areas of under-cover police work. I have **never bowed to political pressure or any other type of intimidating tactics**, and don't intend to start now.

St. Landry Parish Sheriff Intimidated

If people think the **ACLU, local politics, politicians, or any social media network** responses intimidate my decision making as sheriff, they don't know me at all! When the ACLU, Reverend Brown, and others in Vermillion Parish said publicly, *there was no Gremlins Gang in Vermillion parish* they must not have seen or heard my T.V. 3 and T.V. 10 interviews and my radio interview with Michelle on La. Radio Network when I said, ***“Tell those ACLU people, Reverend Brown and others that live in gated communities in Baton Rouge and Washington D.C., and anybody else that is in denial of the Gremlins Gang existence to walk down La. 14 in Vermillion Parish, or in Abbeville on Hawthorne street or on Southeast street any time after 9:00 p.m. and see for themselves!”***

Hopefully after reading this much requested explanation regarding Higgins' departure, people with negative comments about me and my ability to police St. Landry Parish will see how incorrect they are with the idea that somebody got to me!

I wouldn't embarrass my wife, kids, grandkids, family, political supporters and friends by stooping so low as to allow somebody to ***get to me!***

It saddens me to know that people on Facebook who know me and my record as a strong Sheriff have expressed misguided beliefs and lack of faith in me because of reasons I don't know and understand!

If anyone needs additional information or additional clarification don't hesitate to contact me at bguidroz@slpsheriff.com or by calling my direct line at (337) 948-5801, or visit me Monday through Friday at 1592 East Prudhomme Street, Opelousas, La.

Sincerely,

Bobby J. Guidroz, Sheriff

