

## **OLDSMAR OFFICIAL WANTS A DO-OVER**

St. Petersburg Times (Florida)

July 9, 2010 Friday, 4 State / Suncoast Edition

Copyright 2010 Times Publishing Company All Rights Reserved

**Section:** TAMPA BAY; Pg. 1B

**Length:** 828 words

**Byline:** RODNEY THRASH, Times Staff Writer

**Dateline:** **OLDSMAR**

**Highlight:** The council member wishes she could take back comments about "illegal" workers.

### **Body**

---

**Oldsmar** City Council member Janice Miller, whose racially inflammatory remarks against undocumented workers put this town of about 14,000 in the middle of a national immigration debate, said she wishes she could press rewind.

"If I've offended anyone, I am sorry," she said Thursday, hours after the St. Petersburg Times published a story about her comments. "However, the way things are going in this country, I'm not sorry."

At Tuesday night's City Council meeting, Miller asked her colleagues to consider adding a provision in its construction contracts and refuse to **do** business with any contractor who employs illegal immigrants. The council didn't take any action, but a city attorney said **Oldsmar** could make contractors sign an affidavit that they **do** not and will not employ undocumented workers.

In justifying her request, Miller cited Arizona's sweeping immigration law and said that she knew employees of Tampa's Allied Roofing Inc. were "illegal" and that they left behind "a lot of debris, lunch bags and Coke cans and bottles and things like that" when they repaired the roof at City Hall in 2006.

She backed off that statement when a Times reporter called her Wednesday. "I can't say for sure that they were illegal, but it is obvious to me that they were from Central America," she said. "I'm 68 years old and I know what different people look like from different countries. I know what Mexicans look like and Italians or Spanish or black or white or Asian. It isn't a big leap."

The Pinellas County American Civil Liberties Union denounced the remarks; a link to the Times' story appeared on USA TODAY's website; and on Thursday, Allied president John Santoro made his first public comments.

Though he has not formulated an opinion on Arizona's much-debated law, Santoro said his biggest problem with it has "just been illustrated with council member Miller's comments.

"People will make assumptions based on a person's ethnicity or skin color," he said.

Nearly 20 states have already introduced or begun to craft Arizona-like measures. Florida, which has the third-largest number of undocumented residents in the nation (720,000), is among them. Miller, an Italian-American, said she misspoke and wasn't asking **Oldsmar** to replicate Arizona's law. She said if she could **do** it **over** again, she would not have spoken to a Times reporter.

## OLDSMAR OFFICIAL WANTS A DO-OVER

"I said what I said and you caught me off guard," she said. "I was in bed doing my exercises. I'm four weeks out of knee replacement surgery. I shouldn't have said it. I just don't want to go on and on with this. The whole intent of this thing had nothing to do with race.

"All it had to do with was a clause in the contract in the city to make sure that the contractors we deal with make sure they have legal residents working on their crews. I would love to see Americans put back to work."

Miller said she didn't know how to articulate that at the meeting or in subsequent interviews with the Times.

"I thought I was doing it in the spirit of American workers," she said. "I want local people to have our local jobs. I mean it just breaks my heart. Maybe I'm too patriotic and I didn't know there was such a thing until this happened."

Miller said she is still qualified to be a council member and has no intentions of stepping down.

"That's not going to happen," she said. "I have every right to give my opinion."

- - -

Santoro told the Times on Thursday that Miller's comments have "taken racial profiling to the next level" and "stereotyped my workers based on their outward appearance and their nationalities."

He said he was disappointed that an elected official would make such insensitive comments against his company without verification of facts.

He said none of Allied's 25 workers are undocumented and that he has their I-9 forms as well as two other types of documentation to prove it. The foreman on the Oldsmar project is an American-born Hispanic, he said.

"He was upset that someone would think that he was here illegally based solely on his ethnic descent," said Santoro, who is of Italian ancestry. "The bulk of our workforce is Hispanic.

"My concern is that council member Miller made comments regarding citizenship status or one's ability to work in this country based solely on the color of their skin."

Santoro said Miller's comments are not representative of all Oldsmar officials and he would do business with the city again. He said he would have no problem handing over documentation proving his employees are eligible to work in the United States.

First, Santoro said, he plans to contact Miller as well as the city official who oversaw the 2006 roof repairs.

"I would express the fact that I am truly dismayed," Santoro said. "We trust our elected officials to represent us without bias or opinion as to who people are based on the color of their skin or their ethnic background."

Miller said she would welcome such a call.

"Give him my number."

Rodney Thrash can be reached at [rthrash@sptimes.com](mailto:rthrash@sptimes.com) or (727) 445-4167.

## Graphic

---

PHOTO: Janice Miller says she is sorry if she has offended anyone.

## Classification

---

OLDSMAR OFFICIAL WANTS A DO-OVER

**Language:** ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** IMMIGRATION (90%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (90%); CITIES (90%); CITY GOVERNMENT (90%); REGIONAL & LOCAL GOVERNMENTS (90%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (90%); FOREIGN LABOR (90%); EDITORIALS & OPINIONS (89%); US STATE IMMIGRATION LAW (78%); RACE & ETHNICITY (78%); CAUCASIAN AMERICANS (78%); ARIZONA IMMIGRATION LAW (78%); IMMIGRATION LAW (78%); TALKS & MEETINGS (73%); LAWYERS (70%); HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS (69%); SURGERY & TRANSPLANTATION (60%)

**Industry:** LAWYERS (70%)

**Geographic:** TAMPA, FL, USA (79%); ARIZONA, USA (94%); FLORIDA, USA (79%); CENTRAL AMERICA (54%)

**Load-Date:** July 9, 2010

---

End of Document