



THE FLORIDA SENATE

Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100

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SENATOR DWIGHT BULLARD

39th District

July 31, 2013

The Honorable Jeff Atwater, Chief Financial Officer, State of Florida
Office of the Chief Financial Officer
Plaza Level 11, The Capitol
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Chief Financial Officer Atwater,

I am contacting you to request your assistance in a most pressing matter. Recently, I contacted the governor's office regarding a pardon request for Ms. Marissa Alexander. Per Florida law, the governor requires agreement by two cabinet members in order to begin the pardon process. To that end, I provide below a brief summary of Ms. Alexander's case for your review, and request your assistance to help begin the pardon process.

Ms. Alexander, a woman with no criminal record prior to an August 2010 incident, currently finds herself facing 20 years in prison for, in fear of her life, discharging a handgun. No one was shot, killed or injured during this incident in which Ms. Alexander acted only to protect her life.

In the case of Ms. Alexander, we have an individual who was subject to domestic violence, and took measures to defend herself during a very contentious time in her life. She was denied a defense under Florida's "Stand Your Ground" protections, and was found guilty of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. She was sentenced for a mandatory 20 years under the "10-20-Life" statute. Given the circumstances, both actions raise very troubling questions, namely why Ms. Alexander's self-defense claims under Stand Your Ground were rejected, and why she was subjected to mandatory sentencing laws during an act of self-defense. Surely Ms. Alexander had a clear right to defend herself and not retreat from the middle of an altercation in which her life and safety were at stake. Ms. Alexander fired a warning shot to ward off her attacker. No one was shot or hurt, including Ms. Alexander. Stand Your Ground does not require a killing to trigger its protections.

Considering these unique circumstances, I would like to formally request that you support the recommendation to pardon Marissa Alexander. Ms. Alexander took precautionary steps to better protect herself from unwanted danger. The Stand Your Ground defense and exoneration should have applied to Ms. Alexander's case, not 10-20-Life.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and ask look forward to hearing a response from your office as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "D. Bullard".

Dwight Bullard
Florida Senate District 39

REPLY TO:

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Senate's Website: www.flsenate.gov

DON GAETZ
President of the Senate

GARRETT RICHTER
President Pro Tempore