IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE FIFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. A-2008-21-C

THIRD AMENDED ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER REGARDING CERTIFICATION AND REGULATION OF CIVIL PROCESS SERVERS AND

ORDER ESTABLISHING THE FIFTH CIRCUIT CERTIFIED CIVIL PROCESS SERVER REVIEW BOARD

WHEREAS, the number of applications for Certification as a Civil Process Server in the Fifth Circuit has increased dramatically; and

WHEREAS, the administrative burden of certification and regulation of Civil Process Servers pursuant to Section 48.25, et seq., Florida Statutes, has increased comparatively to the increase in the number of application for Certification as a Civil Process Server; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature of the State of Florida clearly intended to supplement service of process by various Sheriffs of Florida Counties with an alternate means of service of civil process by Certified Civil Process Servers when it enacted 48.25, et seq., Florida Statutes; and

WHEREAS, if this Court is to continue to exercise its discretionary power to certify and regulate Certified Civil Process Servers pursuant to 48.025, et seq., Florida Statutes, the procedures to be followed in the Fifth Judicial Circuit must be reformed and clarified; and

WHEREAS, in order to efficiently and uniformly ensure proficiency and professionalism in the service of civil process and in keeping with public trust and legal importance of proper service of process;

WHEREAS, Article V, Section 2(d) of the Florida Constitution, Section 43.26, Florida Statutes, and Florida Rules of General Practice and Judicial Administration 2.215, charges the Chief Judge with the authority to promote the prompt and efficient administration of justice:

It is therefore:

ORDERED as follows:

I. Definitions & Authority:

- "Certified Process Server" means a natural person who has met the requirements for certification provided in Section 48.29, Florida Statutes and this Administrative Order, and who has been placed on the approved list of certified process servers by the Chief Judge of the Fifth Judicial Circuit.
- 2) "Board" means the Fifth Judicial Circuit Certified Civil Process Server Review Board, as established herein.
- Authority of process servers. Placement of an individual's name on the approved list of Certified Civil Process Servers authorizes him or her to serve initial non-enforceable civil process on a person found within the Circuit where the process server is certified when a civil action has been filed against such person in the Circuit or County Court in this State. The Chief Judge may certify a civil process server in a specified Court or Counties within the Circuit rather than Circuit-wide in the Chief Judge's discretion and/or upon request of the applicant.

II. Purpose:

This Administrative Order is intended to ensure proficiency and professionalism in the service of civil process, in keeping with the public trust and legal importance of proper service of process.

III. Fifth Judicial Circuit Certified Civil Process Server Review Board:

1) Board Composition: The Fifth Judicial Circuit Certified Civil Process
Server Review Board is hereby created to monitor the certification,
conduct and professionalism of persons certified pursuant to this
Administrative Order and Section 48.25, et seq., Florida Statutes. The
Board shall be under the supervisory authority of the Chief Judge of the

Fifth Circuit. The Board shall be composed of one (1) Certified Civil Process Servers, one (1) licensed attorney who is a member of the Florida Bar, one (1) representative of a Clerk of Court within this Circuit who is familiar with the service of process, one (1) representative of the law enforcement community in this Circuit who is familiar with the service of process, and one (1) additional individual to be determined by the Chief Judge. The Board shall be comprised of members as stated herein unless a member is otherwise appointed by the Chief Judge. All members shall be appointed by the Chief Judge of the Fifth Circuit. Service on the Board at the Chief Judge's request shall be a condition of continued certification for the Certified Civil Process Server.

- 2) Officers: Quorum. Annually, the Board shall elect one of its members to serve as chair and one to serve as vice-chair. The Chair shall notify the Chief Judge of its selections to these positions in writing. A majority of the Board shall constitute a quorum.
- 3) Vacancies. Any vacancy on the Board shall be filled by appointment of the Chief Judge. A person appointed to fill a vacancy shall serve for the remainder of the term of the member being replaced.
- 4) Terms. The initial terms of the Board members shall be as follows:
 - A. One (1) year: The first appointed Law Enforcement representative, the first representative of a Clerk of Court, and the first member of the Florida Bar appointed by the Chief Judge;
 - B. Two (2) years for all other first members appointed by the Chief Judge.

Following the initial terms, all terms shall be three years. Board members shall be eligible for reappointment. However, no person shall serve more

than two consecutive 3-year terms without prior approval by the Chief Judge.

- 5) **Duties**. The duties of the Board shall include the following:
 - A. The Board shall be responsible for the recommendation of certification and review of complaints and concerns regarding Certified Civil Process certification, receipt and review of complaints and concerns to Certified Civil Process Servers, receipt and review of responses of Certified Civil Process Servers to complaints, conduct of hearings, and recommendations of discipline of Certified Civil Process Servers to the Chief Judge.
 - B. The Board shall have the authority and discretion to adopt rules governing its operating procedures which shall be submitted to the Chief Judge for approval.
 - C. The Board may make recommendations to the Chief Judge regarding an amendment to the rules.
- 6) Fees. Applicants shall pay a first time application and testing fee of \$250.00 payable to the State of Florida. The annual renewal fee shall be \$150.00 and shall be submitted with the request for renewal of certification. All Fees are non-refundable regardless of certification status.
- 7) Records. The Board, or member designated by the Chair of the Board shall maintain records and minutes of its meetings, hearings, and other official actions.
- 8) Expenses. Members of the Board shall serve without compensation.
- IV. Application for Certification.

All Applicants seeking certification shall apply to the Board using the application

form attached hereto as "Attachment A". The application and testing fee must be included with the application. Any application submitted that does not include all necessary fees or documentation will not be considered or processed.

The Board shall accept applications for certification during normal working hours throughout the year.

V. Qualifications.

Applicants must satisfy the following requirements to qualify for certification in the Fifth Circuit:

- A. Be at least 18 years of age;
- B. Have no mental or legal disability;
- C. Be a permanent resident of this State;
- D. Attest that they have read and become familiar with the laws and rules governing the service of process;
- E. Take and pass a written examination administered by the Court and approved by the Chief Judge;
- F. Submit to a background investigation, at the applicant's expense, which shall include any criminal record of the applicant;
- G. File with the Board a certificate of good conduct certifying:
 - there is no record of any pending criminal
 case, whether felony or misdemeanor, against
 the applicant;
 - there is no record of any felony conviction for which civil rights have not been restored;
 - c. there is no record of conviction of the applicant of a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude or dishonesty within the preceding five (5) years;
- H. Take an Oath to Office that he/she will honestly, diligently, and faithfully exercise the duties of a Certified Process Server:
- Execute and file with the Board a bond in the amount of \$5,000.00 with a surety company authorized to do business in this State for the benefit of any person injured by

misfeasance, malfeasance, neglect of duty, or incompetence of the applicant in connection with his/her duties as a process server.

VI. Examination.

The Court shall develop and administer a written examination to all applicants seeking Certified Civil Process Server certification, to ensure that such applicants possess a satisfactory level of understanding and knowledge of the laws and rules regarding the service of process. The contents of the examination shall be subject to the approval of the Chief Judge. A passing score shall be no less than 80% of the questions answered correctly. The examination shall be administered not less than once a year, at such time and place as may be designated by the Court. Notice of the time and place of the test shall be provided by the Court to all applicants.

VII. Issuance of Certification.

Upon satisfactory completion of the specified prerequisites, the Board shall recommend the applicant to the Chief Judge for entry on the list of Certified Civil Process Servers. If the Chief Judge is satisfied that the conditions have been adequately met, the Chief Judge shall issue an Order placing the applicant on the list of certified process servers and provide a copy of the Order to the Court Administrator and the Clerk of the Court for each County within the Fifth Circuit. The Court Administrator and the Clerk of the Court for each County shall maintain a list of Certified Process Servers based upon the Court's Order.

VIII. Identification Card.

Upon certification as a Certified Civil Process Server, the applicant shall be issued an identification card by the Court in the form prescribed by Section 48.29(5)(b), Florida Statutes. Costs incident to the preparation and issuance of the card shall be paid by the applicant. Each identification card shall be renewable annually upon proof of good standing, current bond, and payment of the renewal fee set out in Section III (6) above.

IX. Renewal of Certificate.

- A. Annual renewal. Each Certified Civil Process Server shall pay an annual certificate renewal fee in the amount of \$150.00. A certificate shall be suspended automatically upon non-payment, but shall be reinstated upon application to the Board, accompanied by payment, made within sixty (60) days of the date of the suspension. Upon expiration of the sixty (60) day grace period the initial application fee of \$250.00 must be paid and the written examination must be re-taken. Thereafter any request for reinstatement must be made pursuant to sections IV, V, and VI of this Order.
- B. Biennial testing. To assure that Certified Civil Process Servers have maintained adequate knowledge of current laws and rules applicable to service of process, renewal may require the successful completion of the written examination. There will be a fifty (\$50.00) fee for administering this exam. A passing score for renewal shall be no less than 80% of the questions answered correctly. The renewal examination may be given more frequently and at different locations than the initial application. The Board may require every Certified Civil Process Server to submit to the written examination at any time prior to the renewal of his/her certification.
- C. The Board shall take action as required herein no later than March 15 of the then current year for certification effective April1 of that same year. All certifications shall be valid for one (1) year, except as set forth in Sections X through XIV hereof.

X. Prohibited Conduct, Generally

The following conduct is prohibited and may lead to disciplinary action:

- a. accepting employment in which the Certified Civil Process
 Server has an interest, or continuing employment after
 becoming aware of the existence of an interest;
- making false or misleading statements or misrepresentations
 regarding other Certified Civil Process Servers in this Circuit

to any person with the intent to obtain business as a result of such false statements or misrepresentations or to deprive the subject Certified Civil Process Server from continued business;

- making false statements or omissions to any person with regard to the Certified Civil Process Server's identity or legal authority in order to effect service of process;
- d. continuation of false or deceptive advertising or other activity intended to generate business after receipt of a cease and desist letter from the Board;
- e. use of inappropriate, unprofessional, threatening or intimating tactics to obtain client lists or other business records from other Certified Civil Process Servers' offices or from client's offices;
- f. alcohol or drug abuse, physical incapacity, or mental instability which does or is likely to interfere with the performance of the duties of a Certified Civil Process Server;
- g. misrepresentation as to the identity of the party receiving service or the process server who actually delivered the service. (Note that knowingly executing a false return of service is a felony of the third degree);
- h. obtaining the certification by fraudulent means;
- having his/her certification revoked in another state and/or circuit;
- has been the subject of a court order adjudicating the certified civil process server delinquent on his/her child support obligation
- k. accepting a gratuity, gift or favor that might or appears to interfere or influence professional judgment;
- I. failing to maintain honesty in all professional dealings;
- m. making malicious or intentionally false statements about a colleague;
- n. misrepresenting one's own professional qualifications;
- o. submitting fraudulent information on any document in

- connection with professional activities;
- misrepresenting one's own identity in order to avoid service of process;
- q. any other practices which constitute malfeasance, misfeasance, neglect of duty, or incompetence.

XI. Conduct Warranting Revocation of Certification.

A certificate issued pursuant to these rules may be revoked for any of the following reasons:

- a. Conviction of a felony or of a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude, dishonesty, or false statement;
- b. Fraud, dishonesty or corruption which is related to the functions and duties of a Certified Civil Process Server;
- c. Fraud or misrepresentation in obtaining or renewing certification;
- d. Nonpayment of renewal fees;
- e. Engaging in any of the prohibited activities listed in Subsection XI above.

XII. Disciplinary Procedures.

- A. **Initiation.** Disciplinary proceedings may be initiated before the Board either by a signed written complaint asserting or alleging a violation of these rules or by the Board on its own motion.
- B. Probable Cause; Notification. If a majority of the Board finds probable cause to believe that a violation of these rules has occurred it shall send written notice thereof, identifying the rule or rules alleged to have been violated, to the Certified Civil Process Server by certified United States Mail to the last mailing address on file with the Board. The Board shall further notify the Chief Judge of its findings, who shall have the authority to temporarily suspend the certification of the Certified Civil Process Server pending the outcome of the disciplinary process set forth herein.

- C. Response. Within thirty (30) calendar days of the issuance of a finding of probable cause, the Certified Civil Process Server shall file a written response with the Board. If the Certified Civil Process Server does not timely respond, the violations identified in the finding of probable cause shall be deemed admitted. An untimely response will be deemed a failure to respond.
- D. Board Review. Within sixty (60) calendar days after the filing of the written response to the finding of probable cause or within sixty (60) calendar days following the expiration of the time within which to file a response (if none is filed or filed untimely), the Board shall review the complaint, the finding of probable cause, the response thereto (if any) and any other pertinent materials or information and decide whether to:
 - a. dismiss the proceeding;
 - b. issue a proposed disposition; or
 - c. set a hearing.

The Board shall promptly send written notification of its decision to the Certified Civil Process Server by certified United States Mail to the last address on file with the Board.

- E. No Hearing Demanded. A proposed disposition issued pursuant to subdivision (D)(b) above shall become final unless the Certified Civil Process Server demands a hearing on the decision within fifteen (15) calendar days from the date of the decision.
- F. Timing of Hearing. Absent good cause, no hearing shall take place less than thirty (30) days or more than ninety (90) days from the date of notice pursuant to subdivision (D)(c) above or of the Certified Civil Process Server's demand pursuant to subdivision (E) above.
- G. Identity of Complainant. Upon written request filed with the Board after a hearing has been scheduled the Board shall promptly reveal to the Certified Civil Process Server the identity of the complaining party.

H. Legal Representation. The Certified Civil Process Server may be represented by an attorney at any stage of the proceeding. The Certified Civil Process Server shall be responsible for all of his or her own costs and expenses associated with the hearing and proceedings including attorney fees.

XIII. Disciplinary Hearings.

- A. **Pre-Hearing Discovery**. Pre-hearing discovery shall not be permitted unless expressly authorized by the Board in response to a written request.
- B. Rules of Evidence. Strict rules of evidence shall not apply. The Board may, in its discretion, consider any evidence presented including affidavits, giving such evidence the weight it deems appropriate.
- C. Hearings to be Recorded. The Board shall ensure that all hearings are recorded by any means deemed appropriate by the Board.
- D. Hearing Procedure. At the hearing, both the Board and the Certified Civil Process Server shall be afforded the opportunity to introduce documents and other relevant evidence and to elicit sworn testimony.
- E. **Board Deliberations**. Following the presentation of evidence, the Board shall deliberate regarding its decision. Such deliberations shall take place in private.
- Finality of Decision; Rehearing. Unless the Certified Civil
 Process Server files a request for rehearing within ten (10) calendar
 days from the date of the decision, the Board's decision shall be
 deemed final and forwarded to the Chief Judge as a
 recommendation of disposition. If a timely request for rehearing is
 filed with the Board, the decision of the Board shall not be
 forwarded to the Chief Judge until the request has been disposed
 of by written decision. A copy of the decision shall be sent to the

Certified Civil Process Server by certified United States Mail to the last address on file with the Board. Thereafter, the written decision on the request for rehearing and the decision of the Board shall be forwarded to the Chief Judge.

XIV. Disciplinary Dispositions.

- A. Burden of Proof. If the Board finds that there is clear and convincing evidence that the Certified Civil Process Server has violated one or more of the rules as set forth herein, it shall recommend to the Chief Judge such discipline as it may deem appropriate, consistent with this Order.
- B. Vote Required; Notification. All decisions of the Board shall be made by majority vote, in writing and if adverse to the Certified Civil Process Server, shall contain factual findings supporting the decision. A copy of the decision shall be sent to the Certified Civil Process Server by certified United States mail.
- C. Sanctions. Discipline recommended by the Board and imposed by the Chief Judge may consist of one or more of the following:
 - i. A reprimand from the Board;
 - ii. A reprimand from the Chief Judge;
 - iii. The imposition of costs and expenses incurred by the Board in connection with the proceeding, including costs of recording and investigation;
 - iv. Restitution;
 - v. Requiring the Certified Civil Process Server certification examination be successfully taken, or retaken;
 - vi. Limiting the geographic scope of the practice by county;
 - vii. Suspension of certification not to exceed one (1) year, after which the individual may seek reinstatement of his/her certification as provided in Section (IX) hereof

and upon any other conditions the Chief Judge may deem appropriate;

viii. Revocation of certification.

D. If, after reviewing the Board's recommendation and factual findings, the Chief Judge determines that sanctions are appropriate, the Chief Judge shall enter an Order Imposing Sanctions. The Office of the Court Administrator and the Clerk of the Court for each County shall update the list of Certified Civil Process Servers with notations or removals based on these Court orders.

XV. Confidentiality of Disciplinary Proceedings.

When a disciplinary proceeding is either dismissed or results in a reprimand from the Board, all records of the proceeding shall remain confidential; otherwise all such records shall become public record when the Chief Judge makes a final disposition.

XVI. Review of Adverse Disciplinary Dispositions.

Within thirty (30) days of a final adverse disciplinary disposition after a hearing the Certified Civil Process Server may seek review by common law certiorari to the Fifth District Court of Appeals pursuant to Rule 9.100, Florida Rules of Appellate Procedure.

XVII. Reinstatement.

A Certified Civil Process Server whose certificate has been revoked may apply in writing for reinstatement. Such request shall explain why the applicant believes that he/she should be reinstated and shall include a renewal fee of \$150.00. Whether to recommend to the Chief Judge for or against such a request shall rest in the sole and absolute authority and discretion of the Board. The Board may recommend such conditions upon reinstatement as it deems appropriate.

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IT IS SO ORDERED in Chambers, in Brooksville, Hernando County, Florida, on this 23cd day of August, 2022.

Daniel B. Merritt, Jr.

Chief Judge

Fifth Judicial Circuit

Fifth Judicial Circuit Process Server Application

Date:						
Name:						
Address:						
Phone #:						
Please list below	the contact information you	u would like pul	blished on the registry	. If you prefer to keep your contact	:	
information confidential, please select the following box: N/A Please note, some gated communities will not allow entry if your name is not published on the registry.						
Please note, some	e gated communities will no	of allow entry if	J act Name	islied on the regions.		
First Name: _	me: Last Name:					
City:	State:Zip:					
Are you currently	working in another circuit	? If so, name wh	nich circuit:	_		
				YES 1	<u> </u>	
	hteen (18) years of age or o			<u> </u>	╡	
	e any mental or legal disabi	lities?		<u> </u>	╡	
	ermanent Florida resident?		4.0	<u> </u>	⊣	
	river's license ever been susp			<u> </u>	_	
 Have you e 	ver been arrested for a felon	y or first-degree	e misdeameanor?		<u> </u>	
Education:	(Highest Grade Completed)			High School Diplom	a GED	
High School N	lame:		Location:			
College or University:			Location:			
Degrees Attain						
Additional Tra	ining:					
EMPLOYMENT HISTORY: JOB HISTORY FOR THE LAST 5 YEARS (MOST CURRENT FIRST):						
Job Title:		Supervisor:		Dates Employed:		
Company:	Address:			Phone:		
Job Description	n:					
Reason for lea	ving:					
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Job Title:		Supervisor:		Dates Employed:		
Company:		Address:		Phone:	Phone:	
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Job Title:		Supervisor:		Dates Employed:		
Company: Address:		Address:		Phone:		
Job Description						
Reason for lea	aving.					

I SWEAR OR AFFIRM THAT I WILL WELL AND FAITHFULLY DISCHARGE THE DUTIES IMPOSED UPON ME AS A CERTIFIED CIVIL PROCESS SERVER IN ACCORDANCE WITH ADMINISTRATIVE A-2008-21-B AND WILL ABIDE BY. AND EFFECT SERVICE OF PROCESS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH, THE APPLICABLE FLORIDA STATUTES AND RULES OF COURT.

I UNDERSTAND AND AGREE THAT AS A CERTIFIED CIVIL PROCESS SERVER, I WILL POST WITH THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS, A BOND IN THE AMOUNT OF \$5,000.00 IN CASH OR WITH SURETIES APPROVED BY THE COURT FOR THE BENEFIT OF ANY PERSONS INJURED BY ME AS A RESULT OF ANY WRONGFUL ACT OR OMISSION RELATING TO MY ACTIVITIES AS A CERTIFIED CIVIL PROCESS SERVER.

I UNDERSTAND AND AGREE THAT AS AN APPLICANT FOR THE STATUS OF CERTIFIED CIVIL PROCESS SERVER. A FELONY BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION WILL BE PERFORMED TO ASSURE MY ELIGIBILITY FOR CERTIFICATION.

SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT

FIFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT CERTIFIED PROCESS SERVER

CERTIFICATE OF GOOD CONDUCT

TE OF FLORIDA JNTY OF	
Before me, this day personally appeared irst duly sworn, deposes and says:	who, being
1. There is no criminal case pending	against him/her.
2. There is no record of any felony co	•
3. There is no record of a conviction	of a misdemeanor involving
moral turpitude or dishonesty again	inst him/her within the past 5 years.
	Signature
Subscribed and sworn to before me this	day of
Subscribed and sworn to before me this Personally known or produced identificati	on type of identification produced
STATE OF FLORIDA COUNTY OF	Notary Public
OATH OF OFFICE C	OF CERTIFIED PROCESS SERVER
I,, a citizen of the America, being appointed a certified process Judicial Circuit of the state of Florida, do here support the constitution of the United States a faithfully execute my duties as certified process.	eby solemnly swear or affirm that I will and of the state of Florida, and that I will ess server pursuant to the provisions of §48,
Florida Driver's License Number	Signature
Subscribed and sworn to before me this	
Personally known or produced identification	on∐type of identification produced
	Notary Public

PROCESS SERVER'S BOND

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS: ______, as principal, and _ corporation duly licensed for the purpose of making, guaranteeing, or becoming a sole surety upon bond, or undertakings, required by the laws of the State of Florida, as Surety are held and firmly bound to the State of Florida, Fifth Judicial Circuit, in in the sum of \$5,000, lawful money of the United States of America, for the payment whereof well and truly to be made, we bind ourselves, our heirs, executors, successors, and assigns, jointly and severally, firmly by these presents. THE CONDITION OF THE FOREGOING OBLIGATION IS SUCH, THAT: WHEREAS, if the above bounded principal shall well, truly and faithfully comply with the provisions of the statutes in the State of Florida, then this obligation shall be null and void, otherwise to remain in full force and effect. The surety hereunder may relieve itself from liability to the extent and in the manner set forth in the provisions of the statutes governing the termination by the surety of liability under the bond provided; however, that in no event shall it be relieved from liability as respects transactions occurring before date of termination. If the surety shall so elect this bond may be canceled by giving 30 days written notice to the obligee. This bond shall be in effect from _____ Signed and sealed this Principal Signature of Principal Attorney in Fact

Address of Surety

AFFIDAVIT OF SERVICE

STAT	E OF FLORIDA		
COUNT	ГҮ ОҒ	COURT	
PLAIN'	TIFF(S),		
Vs.		CASE NUMBER:	
DEFEN	IDANT(S).		
		/	
being fi	rst duly sworn, deposes 1. Affiant is not a party the age of eighteen (2. Affiant received the	y to nor interested in the outcome of the above case	and is over
	who was then at	on	and
	M. I have been properly	y certified as a process server by pursuant to the process 2008-21-C and am currently certified to serve process.	visions of
nrocess	with the date and hou	CE: By delivering to the within named person a to of service endorsed by me. At the same time, I can the complaint, petition or other intimal pleading or	delivered to the
of servi	ce endorsed thereupon bar, at the within named	TCE: By delivering a true copy of this process, with my me, and a copy of the complaint, petition, or other person's place of abode with any person residing r and informing the person of the contents.	' initiai pieading
Name		Relationship	

or paper to:	y of the complaint, petition, or other initial pleading		
Name:	Title		
President, or other head of the corporation; or general manager; or in their absence, any or	As President, Vice in their absence, the cashier, treasurer, secretary, or ffice or business agent residing in the state; or the ion's place of business due to failure of the registered 49.091 and informing them of the contents.		
any attachments, to a conspicuous place on th nor a resident fifteen (15) years of age or olde after two (2) attempts at least six (6) hours ap	ng a copy of this process, together with a copy of the property described within. Neither the tenant(s) or could be found at the usual place of residence, art. this process, with any attachments provided to		
for the reason that after diligent search and	inquiry, the within named could not be found in County, Florida. Affiant		
	Address		
_ ^ ^	day ofday of personally known to me or produced identification.		
	_		
	Notary Public		