



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on July 17, 2013

Fired Florida State Attorney's Employee to Sue Zimmerman Prosecutors

The George Zimmerman case may have been decided, but the ramifications of that decision continue to reverberate. Following the jury's [acquittal](#) of George Zimmerman for second degree murder in the shooting of Trayvon Martin, a former employee at the Florida state attorney's office has indicated that he will be [filing](#) a whistleblower suit against George Zimmerman's prosecutors.



Ben Kruidbos (shown), a former director of information technology at Florida State Attorney Angela Corey's office, was fired after testifying at a pre-trial hearing on June 6 that the prosecution had failed to provide all evidence extracted from Trayvon Martin's cellphone to the defense, evidence that included significant items such as images and text messages.

As *The New American* [reported](#) last week, "Included among the photos were pictures of a hand holding a gun and a plant that looked like marijuana. He also recovered deleted text messages that described a transaction for a firearm, where Trayvon Martin appeared to be trying to buy or sell a gun. None of this information had been given to George Zimmerman's defense team."

While printing out a 900-page Florida Department of Law Enforcement report from Martin's cellphone, Kruidbos noticed that a great deal of information was missing. The original report he had generated was three times larger than the size of the one that was handed over to Zimmerman's attorneys. According to Kruidbos, the report he created contained 4,275 photos, while there were just 2,958 photos in the one provided to the defense team.

When it came to Kruidbos' attention that all of the extracted information had not been provided, he hired a lawyer to contact Zimmerman's defense team. Kruidbos also reported his concern to a state attorney's office investigator and to prosecutor Bernie de le Rionda.

On July 12, Kruidbos was fired from the state attorney's office, an act that he perceives as retaliation for his testifying that prosecutors had withheld evidence from Zimmerman's defense.

State Attorney Angela Corey's office had sent a letter to Ben Kruidbos' home notifying him that his employment was terminated, citing the following reasons:

It has come to our attention that you violated numerous State Attorney's Office (SAO) policies and procedures and have engaged in deliberate misconduct that is especially egregious in light of your position as Director of Information Technology (IT).

Your egregious lack of regard for the sensitive nature of the information handled by this office is



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completely abhorrent. You have proven to be completely untrustworthy. Because of your deliberate, willful and unscrupulous actions, you can never again be trusted to step foot in this office.

The letter alleged that Kruidbos' intent "was not pursuant to any pure motive or genuine concern," and continued:

Your feigned and spurious claim of possible liability was nothing more than shameful manipulation in a shallow, but obvious, attempt to cloak yourself in the protection of the whistleblower law.

The letter alludes to Florida's whistleblower law that prohibits retaliation against state employees who reveal information that was intended to be protected.

Now that George Zimmerman has been acquitted, Ben Kruidbos seeks action against the state attorney's office.

"We will be filing a whistleblower action in (Florida's Fourth Judicial District) Circuit Court," said Kruidbos' attorney Wesley White, who states that the suit will be filed within 30 days.

White asserts that Kruidbos' termination was intended to instill a message of fear against potential whistleblowers.

"If they do speak to an attorney, then they are dead," White said. "The State Attorney's Office will do whatever is necessary to not only terminate them, but destroy their reputations in the process."

Judge Debra Nelson has not yet ruled on whether the prosecution violated the Brady disclosure, which requires prosecutors to share evidence with defense attorneys, particularly if the information helps to vindicate defendants.

Zimmerman's attorneys note that it took months to acquire the pertinent information from the state attorney's office. Attorney Mark O'Mara said, "The only way that we really found out about it ... and the only way that we really found out about the intensity of the failure to give us information was when a person from their own office, a whistle-blower, came forward and said, 'I gave them that information in the middle to end of January' and we didn't get it until June 4th. It could have derailed the trial."

When O'Mara filed a request to delay the Zimmerman trial to allow the defense team the appropriate amount of time to sift through the records pertaining to Martin's cellphone, it was denied.

But Corey contends the prosecution engaged in "the highest standards of ethical behavior."

Photo of Ben Kruidbos: AP Images



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