



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on November 1, 2013

Sheriff Nick Finch Acquitted, Immediately Reinstated by Governor

Justice has been served.

Minutes after noon on Thursday, October 31, an eight-person jury acquitted Sheriff Nick Finch of both charges against him. Finch, the sheriff of Liberty County, Florida, was accused of official misconduct and falsifying records. Finch maintained that he was simply standing up for the right of the people to keep and bear arms as protected by the Second Amendment.



The jury agreed, reaching its verdict in fewer than 90 minutes. Within minutes of being found not guilty, Sheriff Finch spoke with Governor Rick Scott, who reinstated Finch within hours.

“Sheriff Nick Finch will be reinstated immediately,” said Governor Scott in a written statement. “I would like to thank the members of the jury in Liberty County for their service in this trial. I would also like to thank Interim Sheriff Buddy Money for his service to the state of Florida.”

It is ironic that Scott would thank the citizens of Liberty County for their service on the jury when it was Scott’s removal of Sheriff Finch in the first place that served to effectively disenfranchise those very citizens.

The New American has followed the persecution of Sheriff Finch since it began in June, including publishing [an exclusive interview with Finch](#) days after his arrest.

In June, Finch was arrested after being charged with misconduct based on his alleged altering and destroying of official court documents. Finch, 50, was booked into the county jail but was later released on his own recognizance.

Sources close to the investigation recount the events of the night before Sheriff Finch was arrested.

At about 11:00 p.m., agents showed up at the jail with search warrants to seize the arrest records. After seizing the records, they subpoenaed employees.

Inexplicably and inexcusably, Sheriff Finch was never contacted by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) and was never allowed to answer questions regarding the release of Parrish or his actions related to it.

Again, regulations were ignored, the law was violated, and a good, duly elected sheriff was arrested and persecuted for defending the right of all people to keep and bear arms.

Upon learning of the incident, Governor Rick Scott immediately suspended Sheriff Finch and appointed Carl Causey, an agent in charge of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, as interim sheriff.

In July, Scott replaced Causey, naming Walter “Buddy” Money as the interim sheriff of Liberty County.

Governor Scott’s actions are nowhere authorized by the Florida state constitution.

Sheriff Finch is answerable to those who elected him to serve as their sheriff. If he acts in a way they



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find offensive or beyond his power, then his constituents can demonstrate their disdain by refusing to reelect him.

In the case of Sheriff Finch, however, Governor Rick Scott has usurped powers not given to him and has effectively disenfranchised every citizen of Liberty County who voted for Finch.

Records published by the Liberty County supervisor of elections show that Finch was elected sheriff in 2012, garnering 52.8 percent of the 3,201 votes cast.

According to court documents obtained by *The New American*, the case against Sheriff Finch began when Floyd Eugene Parrish was arrested on March 8 for carrying a concealed weapon. Sergeant James Hoagland of the Liberty County Sheriff's office arrested Parrish after pulling him over and finding a loaded pistol in his pocket. Parrish was booked into a holding cell while administrative officers began working up the processing documents.

The court records released to *The New American* also reveal that after Sergeant Hoagland left the county jail, Sheriff Finch arrived with a member of Parrish's family and was present while the family member visited with Parrish while the latter was still in the holding cell. Sheriff Finch then allegedly seized the arrest documents, applied "Wite Out" over his name, released Parrish, and informed him that no charges would be filed against him.

The hue and cry from the establishment focused on the supposed "irregularity" of Finch's erasing of Parrish's name from the arrest log. However, at the hearing on October 3, the state attorney acknowledged that it has been "common practice to Wite-Out names on the jail log of people released since 2005."

The complaint against Sheriff Finch alleges that Sergeant Hoagland informed FDLE agents investigating the case against Finch that he (Hoagland) talked to Finch about the Parrish case and that Finch said he "believed in Second Amendment rights."

Workers in the Liberty County sheriff's office reportedly told investigators that Finch ordered them to release Parrish's pistol, as well as another gun seized from his car.

Despite Finch's acquittal, the question remains why a duly elected, constitutional sheriff was arrested for the actions he allegedly took. Why was Sheriff Finch not contacted by the FDLE or the governor and asked to answer the charges against him in a more disciplinary and less overtly legally hostile manner?

In fact, there are applicable Florida statutes setting guidelines on the manner of investigating an official suspended by the governor. [Florida Statute 943.03, Subsection 2](#) mandates that the governor must specifically instruct in writing that the FDLE investigate anyone the governor suspends.

Will Scott and his successors use the Finch case as precedent for the assumption of the power of approval over voters' election of county sheriffs? Will every act of every one of those sheriffs in the 67 counties in the Sunshine State be subject to summary dismissal should they do something that doesn't sit well with the governor or his wealthy campaign supporters?

There is an additional disturbing aspect of the case not being commented on by other news outlets. Imagine that Sheriff Finch had released a man arrested and jailed for having openly preached Christianity in a public place. Would Governor Scott have been so hasty to remove Finch from office? Why would the rights protected by the Second Amendment be subordinate to those guaranteed by the First Amendment?

The protection of each of our God-given rights is as crucial to the perpetuation of liberty as any other.



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Freedom and self-government are threatened just as much by deprivation of the right to keep and bear arms as by a revocation of the right to exercise religion.

Governor Scott's persecution and prosecution of a sheriff standing up for the Second Amendment rights of citizens of his county is particularly questionable given the hostile climate that threatens the right to keep and bear arms nationally.

It's over now, though, and all is forgiven. The fact remains that Finch suffered substantial financial setbacks as a result of his removal and at press time, it was unclear whether Sheriff Finch would receive back pay for the four months he was suspended.

A defense fund was established to help Finch defray the cost of mounting a defense. It is a shame, however, that a good man, a duly elected, liberty minded lawman, was forced into this position by a few connected men and politicians eager to lean on an outsider.

"I am so grateful for all the support from patriots all across the country," Sheriff Finch told *The New American* after he was acquitted. "I am thrilled to be back to work."

Joe A. Wolverton, II, J.D. is a correspondent for The New American and travels frequently nationwide speaking on topics of nullification, the NDAA, and the surveillance state. He is the host of The New American Review radio show that is simulcast on YouTube every Monday. Follow him on Twitter @TNAJoeWolverton and he can be reached at jwolverton@thenewamerican.com



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