



Terri Cantrell  
State Ombudsman

**State Council Meeting Minutes  
November 7, 2023  
Embassy Suites by Hilton  
555 N Westshore Boulevard, Tampa, FL 33609**

STATE COUNCIL MEMBERS			
Marie Brand, Withlacoochee-4, Chair	Present <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jan White, West Central-8	Present <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Paul Wilson, Broward-12	Present <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Kevin Cronin	Present <input type="checkbox"/>
Marshall Kapp, Panhandle-2, Vice Chair	Present <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Louis Grossman, North Dade-13	Present <input type="checkbox"/>
Sharon Lauter, North Central-3	Present <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Valerie Nubi-Collins, Treasure Coast-16	Present <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Tim O’Keefe, East Central-9	Present <input type="checkbox"/>	Mary Darling, At Large Member	Present <input type="checkbox"/>
Jane Horowitz, Pasco & North Pinellas-7	Present <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Maria Cristina Clark, S Dade & FL Keys-14	Present <input type="checkbox"/>
Diane Mongelli, First Coast South-15	Present <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Margaret Riccardi, Palm Beach-11	Present <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

OTHER OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM REPRESENTATIVES	
Terri Cantrell	State Ombudsman
Audra Peoples	Deputy Director
Diandra Taylor	Training & Development Manager
Jo Ann Quiles	Deputy State Ombudsman
Renee Harkins	Legal Advocate
Dennis Yonce	Regional Ombudsman Manager
Alice Terry	Budget Analyst
Gloria Freyre	Regional Ombudsman Manager

Welcome

- Recorded Welcome and Remarks by Secretary Branham
- Opening remarks, introduction to guest speakers, Ellen Cheek and Maria Carruba-Fuentes, Tampa Area Elder Law Attorneys

Remarks by Guest Speakers – Ellen Cheek and Maria Carruba-Fuentes

Diandra Taylor, Training and Development Manager – update on volunteer training

Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance

- Chair Brand called the meeting to order. A quorum was present. Jane Horowitz moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. Valerie Nubi-Collins seconded.

### Chair Brand Announcements, Remarks

Ombudsman volunteers go to nursing homes (NH) and assisted living facilities (ALF); we are going to do more things all the time. We speak to clubs and organizations about our program. We nominate and elect officers and serve as officers. We attend monthly district and local meetings; we bring information to our districts. We share with everyone what we learn. We are asked to join and participate in workgroups, some of us several, which we are allowed to do.

Each annual report, we present our program data and (consultations, complaints that were done, mileage we drove, facilities we visited, meetings we attended). The annual report says we saved the State of Florida by being an Ombudsman. Do you realize how much we really do? Let's pat ourselves on the shoulder for doing the important work. Changes happen, they are inevitable. I've seen more changes in the Ombudsman program than in my nursing career.

Why do nursing homes need to be visited monthly now? We should be consulted, asked for our likes and dislikes, we advocate for residents and the public. I personally thank each of you for your hard work for our program.

### Remarks by State Ombudsman, Terri Cantrell

Terri thanked Marie for her comments and agrees with what Marie said and repeats things today that she says to the volunteers often. There have been a lot of changes, but Terri is grateful for her team, specifically the ones in this room. Terri remembers her first state council meeting. Lori ran the meeting, Lynn took the minutes, Betsy was doing the training, Hunter did the technology. Terri is very grateful for the replacements that are here now. Terri enjoys working with staff and volunteers.

The staffing changes have taken a long time. The human resources process takes a long time as well. Jane asked Terri once what her vision for the program was. Now Terri's vision is that this program needs to be a staff-based program. The work is on volunteers, and for them it can feel like a job. A volunteer position should be enjoyable. Terri said the program has 30 full-time employees. Our state needs more staff to man this program based on the numbers. There are so many moving parts. Terri tries to keep all the plates spinning but there are gaps.

Today's speakers were an important example. The communication gap needs to be bridged so that we can onboard the residents who need legal help.

Terri said going to Baltimore was important because we were able to meet our peers in person. Terri is glad to have her experts in place. Terri says our Ombudsman program has a long way to go compared to other states. Our peers are Ombudsman employees in other states because we are all bound by the same federal laws.

Terri said we should be in nursing homes monthly, as other states are doing it. We can't do it with the number of staff we have. That's why this group is so important. If you need to go to more classes or more resources to make you feel engaged, then do it. Terri talked to a woman who advocated for AARP

for 16 years. They have twice the number of employees. They don't view volunteer work as how much money they saved the state in their annual report. Texas is the state most like Florida, statistically.

Terri is hoping to get two extra employees through Legislative Session. Policies and Procedures are complete. We will continue to collaborate with Jamie Freschi to implement best practices that are out there in the US. She will work with Diandra to go to council meetings to explain things to people on a granular level. Jamie is a State Ombudsman with many years of experience.

Comments:

Ellen Cheek's Senior Legal Helpline is 888-895-7573

Jane Horowitz: The uncertainty of the forms we're supposed to use is causing angst for volunteers.

Terri Cantrell: The point is to capture the voice of the resident. That's what the forms are for. The quantifiable numbers are for the feds, while the stories are for us, for us to recall what was there, to document what was happening.

Sharon Lauter: When you work on a case, it takes a long time to do a correct report.

District Updates:

Sharon Lauter: Making our quotas.

Valerie Nubi-Collins: Business as usual; making our quotas.

Paul Wilson: We are having a guest from the county (elections supervisor) come out and talk to the group. The administrators are not aware of some of the problems, and they go to the same facilities. This will be the topic of discussion next week. Some NH administrators don't like having them come out. The staff at the county says if the admins don't want them to come out then they don't come out. The county can tell the elections supervisor to go out to facilities. There is room for us to help and to get these people into the facilities.

Jane Horowitz: Adult Protective Services does a Christmas drive for ALF and care homes and residences, as well as other agencies for gift cards and baskets. We take names of residents and buy their Christmas gifts. We technically can't do things for ALFs, other agencies do for them.

Jan White: We have 16 Ombudsman and 6 in training. We are keeping pace. We pass out cards with information, senior legal helpline, AHCA, Ombudsman website on back of their cards, info about the program.

Margaret Riccardi: We have several new people. It's a joy to take them out. It's a learning curve for them. We have pleasant meetings where we learn a lot, very vocal meetings. The group works to make each other better volunteers.

Marie Brand: We have 25 Ombudsman with some in training, 3 applications on board, 35 other leads. We go to 46 nursing homes, 143 ALFs, 25 adult family care homes, and have 53 cases.

Council Questions:

Jane Horowitz: Hand out business cards to everyone? Or just a brochure? Residents ask for business cards.

Audra Peoples: You may have business cards printed at the local level or in bulk.

Marie Brand: Is there spell check on the forms?

Diandra Taylor: Forms are fillable, so they should have the spell check feature.

Travel forms: Why submit maps? We're trusted to advocate for the most vulnerable but not trusted to report our travel.

Terri Cantrell: I'm taking care of this travel business for the volunteers. We have a new CFO.

Jane Horowitz: Could the volunteers use a standard email signature?

Marshall Kapp: Could we put together a roster of all staff and volunteers?

Audra Peoples: The Ombudsman report can be pulled from OMIS – first, last, email address, can be shared.

Marie Brand: Any new business?

The group voted and approved a motion to offer hybrid meetings (virtual option) for all in-person state council meetings. Attendance in person is encouraged, but the virtual option would be available for people who are unable to attend.

A suggestion was made to have the roster changed to reflect rolling 'onboarding' and 'offboarding' of state council members so that we know when terms begin and end. Should we do this at the district level? The next roster should reflect the extension of people's terms.

For state council members who would like to extend their term, how is consensus reached? Is this individually determined? If a person wants to extend, should they go through their council to see if the council wants to extend the person or wants to replace them?

Jane Horowitz: There are vacancies. Lynn's council voted on Friday up to council lead and staff member. There are a range of issues. Let's report back to Tallahassee, what date to tell central by December 31. Tell which member is staying and for how long.

Motion to adjourn, moved by Sharon Lauter, seconded by Jane Horowitz.