

Op-Ed from Marleen Suarez, Democrat for Madison County

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My name is Marleen Suarez. As a candidate for Madison County Treasurer in the November Election, I promise to talk about issues that matter. I am a successful small business owner with more than a decade of professional investment industry experience and a plan for how to make the Treasurer's Office work better for you. When appropriate, however, I will point out my opponent's repeated errors in judgment and management of his office.

During a carefully orchestrated press conference last Friday, my opponent announced his "investigation" of his counterpart in St. Clair County, Treasurer Charles Suarez. Just outside of Suarez's county office, Kurt Prenzler told reporters he had found "patterns" in nearly a decade old St. Clair tax sale, leveling the serious accusation that Suarez was taking campaign contributions from tax buyers who were rigging the sales.

This happened on a Friday afternoon, during normal Madison County Administration operating hours. It was property tax day, with real estate tax bills going out in the mail

and online. Yet instead of remaining in the office to serve Madison County residents during one of the busiest times of the year, your Treasurer and his Chief Deputy were in a neighboring county disingenuously defaming a respected public servant, Charles Suarez, who just so happens to be my brother-in-law.

Prenzler chose to attack someone with an unblemished record of decades of public service just because we share a last name - and he did it at your expense. If my opponent truly believed a crime had been committed, why did he call reporters before the authorities? Fred Bathon is in prison, where he belongs. Prenzler should turn his attention to his own office. His reckless actions have cost the citizens of Madison County millions of dollars. Now, he is wasting taxpayer resources by spending his time on a political crusade.

For the past 3 1/2 years, Prenzler has twisted criticisms of his failures into baseless accusations against any Democrat in office at the time of Bathon's crimes. But since Prenzler cannot connect me to Bathon in any way, he reached into his bag of dirty political tricks and attacked someone else named Suarez. No doubt he hoped our name would be forever connected to the Bathon scandal. He presented remote facts as evidence of criminality and did so without remorse for the harm he may cause to an honorable man's reputation. My brother-in-law is a respected public servant and a family man: a cherished husband, father and grandfather. Prenzler committed a shameful act by attacking him in order to tarnish the Suarez name.

I will not stoop to vile political posturing. I am asking the citizens of Madison County to place their trust in me because I am the right person for the job. As your Treasurer, I would reflect the integrity and honor of being an elected public servant, not waste your tax dollars on vicious political stunts.

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