**"People's Grand Jury" foreman charged with felonies after filing "True Bill" against State's Attorney Jeff Siegmeister**

(Editor's note: This will appear in this week's paper, and I don't normally release stories like this early, but this story has the distinct potential of going national as a test case and it will be of interest to folks outside of Dixie County.)

Over the past several weeks there have been various meetings of individuals who have referred to themselves as the “People’s Grand Jury,” after the foreman of the actual State grand jury, Terry Trussell, claimed in several emails to local media that State’s Attorney Siegmeister had interfered with the Grand Jury proceeding by juror tampering and obstructing the duties of the foreman and the grand jury. According to Trussell, in order to have his concerns addressed, he started the People’s Grand Jury movement in Dixie County, a "common law grand jury" made up of concerned citizens. The movement attracted attention from retired UF Law Professor Bpb Deckle, who mocked the idea on his blog as “a bunch of baloney” and “quaint, amusing, and mildly irritating.”

After these meetings by the “People’s Grand Jury,” Terry G. Trussell, presented several documents to the Sheriff’s Office staff and Clerk of Court, including a ”true bill” citing State’s Attorney Seigmeister for interfering with the Federal Grand Jury and the Dixie County School Board for treason for submitting Dixie county students to Common Core. Trussell and his acquaintances also travelled to the Capitol where they attempted to speak with the Governor but instead were diverted to two Florida Department of Law Enforcement agents. During this time the Dixie County Sheriff’s Office had been keeping FDLE informed on the filings made in the name of the “People’s Grand Jury."

Some of the documents filed with the Clerk of Court on behalf of the “People’s Grand Jury” were presented as True Bills of Presentment and charged several government officials throughout the county, circuit and state with various wrongs. Any citizen can file documents with the clerk of court, including "True Bills," as long as the filing fee is paid; however, filings do not have any force of law. For example, a citizen defending himself as his own attorney may file subpoenas and have them served, just as an attorney may. The Court chooses whether or not to recognize such filings.

As a result of these activities and Trussell’s role in presenting these "simulated" documents, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement filed a sworn complaint with Judge James Hankinson in Leon County. After reviewing the complaint filed by FDLE, Judge Hankinson issued a warrant charging Trussell, 70 years of age from Old Town, with 10 counts of Criminal Actions under Color of Law or through use of Simulated Legal Process. State's Attorney Siegmeister recused himself from the proceedings.

On Tuesday September 2, 2014, Dixie County Sheriff’s deputies arrested Trussell on the warrant obtained by FDLE and delivered him to the Dixie County Jail. Trussell remained in custody until the following day when he bonded out of jail.

Trussell is the first person in the state (or nationwide, in the Advocate’s research) who has ever been charged criminally for actions of a “common law jury.” This case has the possibility to become a national test case for the entire concept of the “common law grand jury.” The case could bring into question the conduct of the State’s Attorney, as well as the 843.0855 statute, that was designed to prosecute misconduct by entities like debt collectors, pretending to have judgements against debtors. Since the “People’s Grand Jury” never held itself to be an official body, the use of that statute to prosecute Trussell is going to have substantial legal hurdles to jump.

There are several People’s Grand Jury or “American Grand Jury” movements across the country, with support from libertarians and Constitutionalists like Ron Paul, who say that convening a Grand Jury is a right guaranteed to the people, not the government, by the Constituition. They base this opinion in part on the Supreme Court decision United States v. Williams, 504 U.S. 36 at 48 (1992), when Justice Scalia, delivering the opinion of the court, stated:

“’[R]ooted in long centuries of Anglo-American history,… the grand jury is mentioned in the Bill of Rights, but not in the body of the Constitution. It has not been textually assigned, therefore, to any of the branches described in the first three Articles. It “‘is a constitutional fixture in its own right.’” Scalia continued, “Recognizing this tradition of independence, we have said that the Fifth Amendment's "constitutional guarantee presupposes an investigative body `acting independently of either prosecuting attorney or judge.'

These “Commonlaw grand juries” have been springing up across country from Pennylvania to Colorado. However, in 1946, the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure were established, doing away with the common law grand jury model, and making the legality of common law juries questionable.

However, according to an article in the Creighton Law Review by Roger Roots, “Present federal grand jury practice, which forbids grand jurors from issuing presentments without consent of a federal prosecutor, is unconstitutional and violative of the historical principles on which the creation of the grand jury was premised.”