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## Mayoral candidates seek sign thief

By Nadege Charles  
The Miami Herald

North Miami's three mayoral candidates share the same campaign trail mystery: disappearing signs.

Missing are dozens of towering cardboard signs, as well as little square placards.

The lost signs have united some of the candidates vying for the same seat and sparked a one-man citizen sign-patrol unit.

Mayor Andre Pierre, who is seeking reelection, and his opponents Carol Keys and Jacques Despinosse, filed police reports detailing their missing-sign dilemma.

No arrests have been made, but the mayor's wife, Bernadette Pierre, has fingered someone she said she caught stealing her husband's sign. That allegation prompted a call to the state attorney's office because the suspect, David Levin, is a Keys supporter.

North Miami police are on the case.

It's not uncommon during election season for campaign signs to vanish. Sometimes property owners remove signs placed without their consent or city code-enforcement officers remove signs that are affixed on the public right of way.

Nefarious tactics are under way, said mayoral candidate Carol Keys, who said she lost 14 signs worth about \$600 in one day.

"Someone is trying to suppress my freedom of speech. My main platform is to fight crime," she said. "I think it's ironic someone is stealing my signs."

Keys is offering a \$2,000 reward for any one who can provide information that leads to the conviction of the culprit who is tearing down or defacing her signs.

And in an act of solidarity, she is shelling out an additional \$500 for information that leads to the conviction of whoever is stealing the signs of her opponent, Despinosse.

Mayor Pierre has no reward for his signs, but his wife is on the lookout.

According to a police report filed earlier this month, Pierre's wife told police she caught North Miami resident David Levin pulling up one of her husband's signs and stashing it in his car.

"You have folks that support one candidate and don't support another candidate, that's

politics. My wife witnessed him picking up my sign; I believe her," Pierre said.

Levin, an outspoken Pierre critic and Keys supporter, patrols the city in the early morning hours to guarantee Keys' signs are secure and safe.

When Bernadette Pierre questioned Levin about taking her husband's signs, she told police he replied "F--- off" and "F--- you."

Levin, who is listed as a suspect in the police report, denies taking the mayor's signs or having a confrontation with Bernadette Pierre. An area canvass of where the sign was allegedly stolen came up empty, according to the police report. Police questioned Levin at his home and looked through the windows of his car; they did not see Pierre's missing sign, the report said.

"Everyone knows I'm a supporter of anyone running against Mayor Andre Pierre. This is an attempt to bloody my nose," Levin said. "I am the leading obstacle in Andre Pierre's way because I am constantly attacking him in public."

All of the candidates say they are victims and had nothing to do with the disappearance of their opponents' signs.

In the words of Pierre: "It's politics."

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