

TELEPHONIC WITNESS STATEMENT

DATE: [Not Provided]

TIME: [Not Provided]

INTERVIEW OF: Representative Thomas Winfield

INTERVIEW BY: Detective Corporal Kenneth Buonaiuto
Rhode Island State Police Financial Crimes Unit

LOCATION: Rhode Island State Police Headquarters
311 Danielson Pike
North Scituate, Rhode Island 02857

SUBJECT: 38 Studios Investigation

1. **Q.** Hello, sir?

A. Yes.

2. **Q.** How are you? This is Rep Winfield, is that correct?

A. That is correct.

3. **Q.** I appreciate you giving me a call back. I'm sure by now you know why we're calling, we're just reaching out to all reps and senators, or all reps that were in the legislature during 2010, May of 2010.

A. Yes.

4. **Q.** Okay, in regards to 38 Studios, and we're just kind of opening up the lines of communication, and nobody is a target of any investigation, we're just giving everybody the opportunity to speak with us in the event that they have some information that might be of interest. Is, is that true that in 2010, specifically May, you – you were in the House of Representatives?

A. Yes.

5. Q. Okay. And what – what is the length of your term at this point?

A. **At that point, um, ...**

6. Q. Or when did you – when did you start, when was your first – your first [Indiscernible] ...

A. **I was elected in 1992, which my service started in November -- I'm sorry, January of 1993 is when I was sworn in.**

7. Q. Okay. And that's been uninterrupted to present?

A. **That is correct.**

8. Q. Okay. In the past six years or so, what types of committees have you been a part of?

A. **I sit on the Oversight Committee, the House Labor Committee, and – I think that's about it.**

9. Q. Okay. And presently you're on the Labor or, or Oversight?

A. **Labor and Oversight ...**

10. Q. Presently.

A. **-- yeah.**

11. Q. Okay. How about 2010, which one of them were you on?

A. **I think Labor.**

12. Q. Okay. All right. All right, specifically in May – on May 25th of 2010, the Jobs Creation Guaranty Program bill came to the full floor, do you remember that?

A. **Yes.**

13. Q. Okay. And I don't believe that bill went into the Labor Committee, but ...

A. **No, it came out of House Finance.**

14. Q. Okay. Very good. Okay. So what can you tell me about that bill that you remember?

A. **It was a lot of money to earmark to, you know, at that time. We talked about it. We**

knew that the – there was an initiative coming, you know, from the Governor and they wanted to, you know, set aside some money for small business in the amount, you know, of two, three, \$5 million to help them, you know, do whatever to help implement programs that there – and issues they were trying to work on, which would ultimately, you know, employ people.

15. Q. And this is the way it was being presented to the full floor by who?

A. Well I guess it was introduced – I guess it came out of Finance. So Costantino was the Chairman at the time.

16. Q. Mm hmm.

A. So that meant Fox was the majority leader and Murphy was the Speaker.

17. Q. I – I think, and correct me if I'm wrong, I think at that time point in time Murphy had stepped down and Fox was the Speaker at that point, does that make sense?

A. Um, it – Well it's probably just about that time. I thought – Yeah. Yeah, that could be it.

18. Q. Okay.

A. You'd have to go and – I, I – I was looking; I thought I had notes and I – I just couldn't put my finger on them, and I – You know, I mean I know the – I remember most of it. But the one striking thing that I remember is that we were kind of huddled, and we talked about it, and I – I'm not quite sure if it was Representative Menard or it could have been MacBeth, I thought it was Representative Menard ask the question, *is this particularly earmarked for one company?* And he said Absolutely not. I'll never forget it.

19. Q. Okay.

A. And, you know, shortly thereafter, do we move the money over to the Executive Branch? During the summer month they said they were going to, you know, earmark this

towards 38 Studios, which we all were in a uproar which that wasn't a good idea.

20. Q. Mm hmm. Okay. Was there anybody at those hearings on the floor, you know, that typically wouldn't be there? I mean anybody from the Governor's office, anybody from EDC, any – any outside individuals that, you know, just maybe caught your eye?

A. I – I – I don't remember that. But, you know, they're – they, they could have been in the gallery. They – They could have been watching us on TV in – in the Governor's office, and we, you know, I mean I'm – I'm sure that there's a tape of the proceedings.

21. Q. Mm hmm.

A. But I don't remember anybody on the floor out of the ordinary.

22. Q. Okay. And you voted in favor, is that correct?

A. Yeah.

23. Q. Okay. I mean, it – it sounds like probably you were on board with everybody else thinking that this was a great thing for small businesses and all, is that correct?

A. Yup. Well the first one that we made was to, you know, was to Hope Global, and that worked out very well.

24. Q. Mm hmm.

A. But then ...

25. Q. And how much was that loan for, do you remember?

A. It was a couple of million dollars. I – I don't remember the specifics of it, but I do remember getting a, a briefing sheet or something from the EDC telling us what was going on and kind of, you know. And subsequently, they came in and talked about it. There was a Oversight Committee hearing, and they talked about it. And they were very, you know, it was – they were very appreciative, and – and they told us what they did, and it worked out quite well.

And they paid us back, so it, you know, ...

26. Q. Right.

A. -- did what it was supposed to do.

27. Q. Now you – you said that was Hope Global?

A. Hope Global is a textile company up on – in Cumberland. They're uh – You know, they've – they've ... oh God, for a long time. A lot of times you'd see their company – they –
When the Blackstone Valley River overflows, most of the time the news media will go up and take a picture of their firm, because they get flooded out quite often.

28. Q. Okay. And, and this money came out of that program or this was something totally ...?

A. Yeah. No, no, it was that – That was the program that it was coming out of.

29. Q. Okay. And so why did it have to go to the Oversight?

A. No, we just – we, we brought – you know, we were just – They happened to come in; we were talking about different things, and they came in. And one of the things, I believe it was the Small Business Export Assistance Center based out of Bryant College was doing some and saying, hey, these are some of the – the initiatives that have worked, and maybe we should look at, you know, expanding them. And when they came in and were talking about it, Hope Global was one of the companies that came in and talked about it.

30. Q. I see. All right. And – and the timeframe for that was – was prior to this additional 75 million added ...?

A. No. No, this was a...

31. Q. All after. Okay.

A. Probably – This was probably two years after we did that. So while ...

32. Q. Okay.

A. -- that -- Now the p- at that time, that -- the, the -- I don't think, if we could go back, the 38 Studios was still actively working; it had not crashed yet. But probably shortly thereafter.

33. Q. Okay. Do you know anybody at 38 Studios?

A. No.

34. Q. Okay. How about Michael Corso?

A. Nope. I know the name. I knew, you know, he was always, you know, he was somebody that, you know, a lot of times worked with the Speaker -- or Speakers, I guess. But no, I never had any interaction with him.

35. Q. And how do you know that he worked closely with the ...

A. Well you'd just hear ...

36. Q. -- [Indiscernible]

A. -- his name.

37. Q. What's that?

A. You would -- you would hear his name being bantered about.

38. Q. Where, on the floor or what do you -- what do you mean by that?

A. I don't know, just sometimes, you know, you'd be -- you know, they'd -- you'd hear something and say, oh, you know, that's -- they're -- they're working on something and -- and Corso was, you know, was in on it. You know, who's the players, who's the, you know, who -- who is uh, who's working on things? And, you know, when the 38 Studios was around, you know, you know, once that started to snowball that we heard, you know, Corso's name quite a bit.

39. Q. Mm hmm. And, and what -- So other type of things prior to this 38 Studios that he was,

you know, you heard his name thrown around?

A. Eh, he was always a – You know, he – It's not that – not that he was -- He was always a player in any, you know, it was, you know, somebody was bringing or pitching something, he always seemed to, you know, name pop up. It – But, you know, you – I never saw the guy; I didn't know who he was.

40. Q. All right.

A. But you'd hear his name being bantered about. You know, who's – who's – you know, who's – In other words, sometimes, you know, you – you would know what lobbyist would be working on a particular, you know, ...

41. Q. Right.

A. This is the guy. So, you know, technically I guess we find out now that yeah, he probably should have been a registered lobbyist, but, you know, he was – yeah, his name was bantered about.

42. Q. But – And any specific bills or, or, or uh ...

A. No, it was never bills, it was always like, you know, someone was bringing someone into the building or someone, you know, ...

43. Q. Mm hmm.

A. It was never a specific piece of legislation.

44. Q. Okay.

A. Not that I recall. I mean, you know, I could – You know, I – I'm trying to – The kid that would really know a lot – Have you talked with Rene Menard?

45. Q. Yes. You know something, no, I don't think I have. No. Not yet.

A. ... Menard was a rep at the time. He is since not a rep.

46. Q. Right.

A. You know, he remembers things that, you know, sometimes I'm like, oh yeah. And he would ask me a question, and I'm like, oh yeah, I – all right, yeah. And he would remember things. So when you get to him, he – he sometimes – he remembers things. He's a copious note-taker too, so he would always write a lot of stuff down and he would remember things.

47. Q. Yeah, I'm looking at my list and – Was he – was he in the – in the House during that two thousand – Oh yeah, I see it. Yup.

A. Yeah. Yeah.

48. Q. All right. You – do you – I have one contact number for him. Do you – do you have anything for him like on a cell phone or anything?

A. What number have you got?

49. Q. I have [REDACTED]

A. [Indiscernible] If he doesn't pick up, it's because he's – he's working, but you leave a message, he'll get back ...

50. Q. Yeah, you know something, no, I'm going to stand corrected, he actually, - we, we did talk to him already.

A. [Indiscernible]

51. Q. Okay. No, no, I have him. All right, I have him checked off. Okay, is there anything I haven't asked you that you think is – that you want to, you know, relay to us or something important that maybe we haven't really uh ...

A. No.

52. Q. -- talked ...

A. But I'm – I – You know, when – when they – when the Speaker said that, you know,

we – I said, you know, I started to look around, because I thought I had some notes, and I – I just – I don't know where the heck they are. But, you know, if something comes up, I'd be, you know, I mean, more than glad to give you, you know, a buzz and ...

53. Q. Mm hmm.

A. -- give you a heads up. I – You know, I – But just ... Nothing's popped into my mind other than kind of, you know, what you talked about.

54. Q. And what's your district?

A. My district is District 53, which encompasses most of Smithfield and a small part of Gloucester.

55. Q. Okay. Very good. All right, I do appreciate your time. And again, if something does come up or something comes to mind that you think is important, just give me a call.

A. Likewise, both ways.

56. Q. All right. Thank you.

A. Thank you.

57. Q. Okay. Bye bye.

STATEMENT TAKEN BY:

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WITNESS STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE THOMAS WINFIELD

Ref: 12-3-IV