

TELEPHONIC WITNESS STATEMENT

DATE: [Not Provided]

TIME: [Not Provided]

INTERVIEW OF: Representative Joseph Almeida

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. This is Corporal Buonaiuto with the Rhode Island State Police.

A. Oh, how are you doing? ...

2. Q. Good. So not – not an emergency. Do you have a few moments?

A. Yes, sir.

3. Q. Okay. Is it – is it Joseph S. Almeida?

A. Yes, sir, that's me.

4. Q. Thank you. Okay, sir. You are presently a member of the House of Representatives, is that correct?

A. Yes, sir.

5. Q. Okay. And can you give me a, a length in your term. I know you kind of had a little hiatus in between, but when were you first elected?

A. Ninety-eight.

6. Q. Ninety-eight? And were you sworn in in '99 or you were sworn in in '98?

A. Ninety-nine.

7. Q. Okay. So sworn in in 1999. And then your first term went till – till when?
- A. **Two thousand ten.**
8. Q. Two thousand ten.
- A. **Yup.**
9. Q. So the – till December 2010?
- A. **Beg your pardon?**
10. Q. Is that until December 2010 or January, the first few days of January?
- A. **Yeah, that would be – it was right after the election. I -- Officially, it was in two – December.**
11. Q. Okay. So December. And then – then you came back in when, 2012?
- A. **That is correct.**
12. Q. All right, 2012 to present. Okay. All right. Who – And, and what committees have you most recently served on – if we can go back to ...
- A. **Well, ...**
13. Q. -- you know, maybe 2008 / 2009, that time period.
- A. **Labor Committee and Finance.**
14. Q. And Finance. Okay. And what – do you remember you – most recently with Finance?
- A. **No, now I'm with the Judiciary Committee.**
15. Q. In Judiciary. Okay. And how long were you with Finance, what were the time periods for that?
- A. **I would say about two years.**
16. Q. And, and what – what dates were those?
- A. **Oh. You got me on that one. It was when Costantino was in.**

17. Q. Okay.

A. Then.

18. Q. All right. So – so some time in 2010 anyway.

A. Yeah. Yeah.

19. Q. Okay.

A. Yeah.

20. Q. All right. Do you – do you remember the specific bill, the Jobs Creation Guaranty Program?

A. Yes. Yup, I'm aware of it.

21. Q. Okay, and I – from what I understand it went through the Finance Committee first and then once it got through the Finance Committee, it went to the full floor, is that correct?

A. Yes, sir, that's correct.

22. Q. Okay. So we- if we can just think about the Finance Committee time that it was in there, what – what's your recollection of that bill that you can remember as far as debate, discussion, vote and all that kind of stuff?

A. Yeah, it just basically to create jobs and to uh, you know, in the IT field whatever you want to call it. It was supposed to create jobs. I believe it was supposed to be ... I don't know ... [Indiscernible] downtown, the building over there, the Corliss building.

23. Q. Yeah.

A. And that's basically what I did, I voted on [Indiscernible] it was going to create jobs and be a high tech business.

24. Q. Okay. And so, so who actually discussed the pros of this – this bill in – in the Finance Committee?

A. Uh. Hmm. It was basically ... under Costantino, he introduced it and we went, you know, basically went along with it. So.

25. Q. Okay, did – were there any people that came in during the hearings and testified about it, or?

A. Not that I remember.

26. Q. Okay. So nobody from the E- EDC came in and testified at all?

A. Nobody from where?

27. Q. From the EDC, the Economic Development Corporation?

A. No, I don't remember that, I don't recall that at all. It may have happened, ...

28. Q. Yup.

A. -- but if I missed a meeting, you know, because ... that I missed,...

29. Q. Right.

A. -- [Indiscernible] ...

30. Q. All right, do you ...

A. [Indiscernible]

31. Q. Do you remember –

A. [Indiscernible]

32. Q. Do you remember any specific businesses that came in with their representatives to testify at all?

A. No, I don't. No.

33. Q. Okay.

A. [Indiscernible] business.

34. Q. All right. So now once it gets to that committee, is it a, is it an open vote? How does that

work, does? Or is there a closed session vote, or – how does that work when it comes to uh?

A. No, that was – that was – that was an open vote, and – and - Yeah, that's an open vote. And from there it would go – it would go to the floor.

35. Q. Okay. Any reason why, do you remember why the – it went from a \$50 million fund to a 125 million?

A. Hell, no, I have no clue.

36. Q. Okay. Was that – was that done in the – in the committee?

A. It may have. [Indiscernible] feel like that, and I understand what you're trying to do, but it may have. Again, I hadn't make all the meetings, but I think that come out of Public Records. Um.

37. Q. Mm hmm.

A. It should be – my voting attendance should be there.

38. Q. Okay.

A. But I'll say I don't recall that.

39. Q. Okay. All right. And once it got to the floor, do – do you remember anything specific about that particular day?

A. Just the conversations and the arguments for and against it, as always.

40. Q. Okay. And, and if you had to characterize the arguments against, how would you characterize those or describe those?

A. Basically, you know, whether – whether or not it was good for the state. And they – Nobody really talked about the money factor, just a matter of where it would be placed and – and how – how it would create money for the state.

41. Q. Okay. All right. And the fors would be what, just uh basically this is – this is going to help

the economy?

A. Exactly. ... it was all about the economy ... at that time anyway.

42. Q. Right. Right. So there – Was there any discussion specifically about any companies interested?

A. None. I don't think – I don't recall any of that.

43. Q. All right. Had you ever heard of 38 Studios prior to this?

A. No.

44. Q. All right. Nobody spoke to you even off the record about 38 Studios?

A. No, sir.

45. Q. Okay. Very good. Okay, so when was the first time you learned about 38 Studios?

A. It had to be back in, you know, when I sat on the Finance Committee and it was introduced [Indiscernible].

46. Q. Okay, what -- I'm not sure I understand what you mean. What, what do you mean introduced at the Finance Committee? You mean the bill was introduced?

A. That's correct. That's correct.

47. Q. Okay. So there was discussion about 38 Studios before it went to the House floor?

A. Oh yeah, that's always the way. You – you introduce it to the committee, you talk about whatever the bill might be, and then we gather whatever information and you give it to the floor.

48. Q. Right. But what – what – what – Okay. So the bill wasn't specifically addressing 38 Studios, so how was 38 Studios – In what – in what – in what context was 38 Studios brought up in relation to this bill during the Finance Committee meeting?

A. ... the only kind of things that I remember is that it would be good for the state for

economic development.

49. Q. Okay. But I'm – I'm not talking about that – that specific bill now, I'm talking about 38 Studios themselves. How – What – When and how was that discussion brought up about 38 ...?

A. ... I don't know exactly. I mean, I'd be - I'd be lying if I knew exactly when – when. It was a while ago, you know. So. And then uh, like I said, I didn't make all the meetings, but, you -- you can check the records when – when I was there, but I just don't remember. All I know is that Studio eventually made it to the floor and there was a discussion, a battle of pro and con and we voted.

50. Q. Okay. I – I think – And I'm not sure if maybe you're misunderstanding me. That – When I talk about that bill, I'm not talking about – That – that's not 38 Studios bill. That bill is – doesn't even include 38 Studios in it. So when I say the Jobs Creation Program – Guaranty Program, I'm – I'm – They're not one in the same. 38 Studio – when I ask you about 38 Studios, that's – that has nothing to do with the bill. So I'm – I'm just asking you when did you first have discussions about 38 Studios? Noth- nothing to do with the bill, I'm just talking about 38 Studios themselves.

A. Hmm. I'm thinking that you just got me off guard on this one, um.

51. Q. Right.

A. And my mind is wrapped around 38 ...

52. Q. No, I'm not asking you to – I'm not asking you to say something that you don't remember. Because ... I just want to make sure I'm clear ... A moment ago you said 38 Studios was discussed during the Finance Committee meetings. Are you – are you misunderstanding what I'm ...? 38 ...

A. Yes, I did. Yes, I did.

53. Q. You – are you ...

A. **[Indiscernible]**

54. Q. You're implying that the bill was discussed, right?

A. **The bill was discussed.**

55. Q. Right.

A. **And I wrapped my mind around 38 Studios...**

56. Q. Right. Right. Right.

A. **So [Indiscernible] that's all.**

57. Q. Right, I know. So specifically, 38 Studios, when was the first time that you heard about that or that it was discussed, you know, within the context of the legislature?

A. **It would probably be on the House floor at that time.**

58. Q. Okay. All right. But you're not sure.

A. **[Indiscernible]**

59. Q. You're - you're speculating.

A. **I'm still not sure.**

60. Q. Yeah. Okay.

A. **I'm speculating.**

61. Q. I got you. Okay. All right. Do you know who Michael Corso is?

A. **No, I don't till I read him in the paper. [Laugh]**

62. Q. Okay. All right. Is there anything I haven't asked you that you think is important to let me know?

A. **No, you did a good job, that's for sure.**

63. Q. Okay. All right. I - I thank you very much. Can I give you my telephone number or do you have it already from a previous message maybe in case there's something that comes to mind that

you want to let me know?

A. **Yup, I – I got you here on the cell phone. Is that good enough, or?**

64. Q. No, it's a different telephone number.

A. **Oh, okay.**

65. Q. Yeah.

A. **The number?**

66. Q. That would be 444 ...

A. **Four ... 444. Yup.**

67. Q. One – 1205.

A. **Oh, okay, 1205.**

68. Q. Do you want me to spell my last name?

A. **Huh?**

69. Q. Do you want me to spell my last name?

A. **Please do.**

70. Q. Yup. So it's Corporal Buonaiuto, B-U-

A. **Okay.**

71. Q. -- O-N ...

A. **O-N ...**

72. Q. A-I ...

A. **A-I ...**

73. Q. U-T-O.

A. **...T-O. Be-o-to [phonetic] Okay.**

74. Q. Buonaiuto.

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A. Okay.

75. Q. All right. I thank you very much Mr. Almeida. Have a good day.

A. No problem. You too. Bye bye.

STATEMENT TAKEN BY:

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