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### **Attorney Peter Vujin explains GEO and Dream Defenders conflict**

Dream Defenders, a human rights organization, accused GEO Group of caging children and separating families immigrating to the United States. In light of the recent cease-and-desist claims brought against Dream Defenders by GEO Group, a contractor of ICE, attorney Peter Vujin explained the conflict. Dream Defenders, a human rights organization, accused GEO Group of caging children and separating families immigrating to the United States. GEO Group responded by threatening Dream Defenders, alleging that the claims were false, libelous and defamatory. Vujin, a Miami-based attorney, explained that even though GEO Group is unlikely to win this argument, large corporations are able to take a few blows, especially if it will do more damage to smaller organizations. "Corporations routinely instigate litigation even when they know they are not likely to prevail on the merits, because they can take the cost if they lose," Vujin told The Florida Record. But there is a complication in this situation, as GEO's reason for the allegations against Dream Defenders were just meant to silence them, Vujin explained. "If otherwise groundless litigation is instigated for the purpose of silencing a critic, it becomes a SLAPP lawsuit - strategic lawsuits against public participation. Those are prohibited in Florida pursuant to statute," Vujin said. Even though SLAPP lawsuits are prohibited in Florida, there is a loophole that allows judges to establish that some cases may have merit and others don't, therefore dismissing a lawsuit that may actually have standing in a court. "As such, it is important to have the Legislature in Tallahassee remake the SLAPP statute to tighten the legal loopholes that enable corporations to get away with silencing critics," Vujin said. "In this particular case, GEO corporation has to show that Dream Defenders were, in fact, malicious, in that they knowingly disseminated false information with the intent to hurt GEO, which is impossible due to GEO being a 'public entity' and therefore subject to criticism without fear of libel lawsuits." According to Vujin, it is unlikely that GEO's claims will stand up, as the ACLU has supported Dream Defenders, arguing for its First Amendment rights.