



On the morning of August 18, 2026, news broke that Palm Beach County Clerk and Comptroller Michael Caruso had been charged with serious felonies following an FDLE investigation overseen by Attorney General James Uthmeier.

Governor DeSantis quickly suspended Mr. Caruso. The Republican Party of Florida (RPOF) then contacted me, as Chairman of the Republican Executive Committee of Palm Beach County (REC), and directed us to prepare to replace him as the party's nominee under our rules if he withdrew. The Republican Party of Florida (RPOF) also publicly stated it would not support Mr. Caruso's reelection if he remained in the race.

I was instructed to identify qualified candidates and began coordinating with an advisor to Governor DeSantis. Over the following days, three strong candidates stepped forward: Tom Sutterfield, Forrest Freedman, and David Lovett.

We organized a special REC meeting on short notice. On August 25, 2026, the REC nominated Tom Sutterfield as the replacement nominee, pending Mr. Caruso's decision.

Mr. Caruso remained in custody in Orange County. At a bail hearing on August 29, the judge set bail at \$160,000 and noted serious questions about the investigation, including its timing. The judge found there was not a substantial probability that Mr. Caruso had committed the alleged acts.

Throughout this period, I kept the Governor's office, RPOF officials, the potential candidates, and others informed. I also stayed in contact with Supervisor of Elections Wendy Sartory Link to ensure we met all deadlines. She delayed ballot printing and granted the party additional time.

Mr. Caruso has since announced he is remaining in the race and will fight the charges to clear his name. He previously served as State Representative for House District 87 and was appointed by the Governor in August 2025 to fill the Clerk and Comptroller position after Joseph Abruzzo left. He is currently Palm Beach County's only Republican constitutional officer.

Mr. Caruso will appear on the November 3 ballot as the Republican nominee for Clerk and Comptroller.