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## **Office Depot Contract Terminated by Lee County Florida School District Based on Audit Results**

**ALEXANDRIA, VA (January 27, 2010)** – The National Office Products Alliance (NOPA) applauds the decision of the Lee County School District to terminate its relationship with Office Depot based on the results of a thorough audit by Director of Audit Bob Brown, of office supplies pricing and actual charges under the U.S. Communities national contract, and the recommendations of Superintendent Dr. James Browder.

"Their actions serve as a bright beacon to local governments and school districts that suspect they may have overpaid for office supplies under similar contracts," said Chip Jones, chairman of NOPA and president of Minton-Jones, an independent office products dealer in Atlanta, GA.

The need for an audit was first brought to school district's attention two years ago by former Office Depot employee and now federally protected whistle-blower David Sherwin. Lee County officials announced their decision yesterday to terminate their contract with Office Depot and sign a \$297,000 settlement with the company.

"Superintendent Browder, Director Brown and the members of the board should be commended for their systematic efforts to audit their contract with Office Depot and their decisive action to end the contract with the company based on the results," said Chris Bates, president of NOPA.

"Local media in Florida and elsewhere have played a central role in helping ensure that public interests are protected by giving high visibility to the risks and identified problems associated with 'piggy back' sole-source office supplies contracts, such as the U.S. Communities national contract. Matt Clark of the *Naples News* has been especially persistent and balanced in his coverage of this important issue as it has developed in Florida," NOPA chairman Jones noted.

"This situation again highlights the serious flaws of sole-source contracts, which stifle competition among multiple suppliers essential to ensuring best overall delivered value and contract compliance in office supplies procurements. Over the past few years, a growing number of local communities and state governments have discovered these serious flaws in their sole-sourced office supplies contracts," Bates added. "It is time for government at all levels to abandon this failing procurement model," he concluded.

### **About NOPA**

The National Office Products Alliance (NOPA) is the trade Association for independent office products dealers and their trading partners. For more information, visit [www.nopanet.org](http://www.nopanet.org) or call (800) 542-6672.