

Plea hearing canceled, new judge takes over Osorio criminal case

By Paul Brinkmann

March 1, 2013

A new judge is taking over in businessman Claudio Osorio's criminal case, the latest in a long line of attorneys and judges who were involved in his cases over the last 12 years.

Osorio was due to plead guilty in Miami on March 1, ending a long and celebrated career as an entrepreneur and CEO of large companies. But the plea hearing was canceled when U.S. District Judge Cecilia Altonaga recused herself.

Osorio has given little or no reason for frequently changing attorneys along the way, but observers have said it is not uncommon for wealthy people accused of crimes to change attorneys as their economic status diminishes.

Two of Osorio's companies, global distributor CHS Electronics and manufacturer InnoVida Holdings, ended in expensive Chapter 11 bankruptcy cases and litigation.

An army of attorneys and law firms worked on those cases, including some of South Florida's most prominent:

- Scott Baena of Bilzin Sumberg Baena Price & Axelrod was the bankruptcy attorney for CHS.
- Robert Zarco of Zarco Einhorn Salkowski & Brito represented Osorio and InnoVida in many state court cases.
- Geoffrey Aaronson of Aaronson & Schantz took over from Zarco after Osorio began losing in court and the bankruptcy became a liquidation.
- Miami criminal attorney Orlando do Campo represented Osorio when he was first charged with multiple counts of fraud.

- Criminal attorneys Humberto Rolando Dominguez and Zeljka Bozanic currently represent Osorio.
- Judges in almost all of the court cases grilled Osorio's attorneys regarding the veracity of Osorio's statements.

Investors who sued Osorio were represented by Abbey Kaplan, of Kluger, Kaplan, Silverman, Katzen & Levine, and Kendall Coffey of Coffey Burlington, among others.

Osorio's lies about InnoVida were unraveled partly by attorney Mark Melandof Meland Russin & Budwick, who was appointed InnoVida receiver in one of the state court cases and became a Chapter 11 trustee.

Since he was charged with fraud, Osorio has been accused of submitting forged documents in his bankruptcy case – letters from Royal Bank of Canada that purportedly said he does not have control over offshore funds.

Attorneys for the trustee overseeing InnoVida discussed removal and safeguarding of emails between Zarco and Osorio before the SEC was granted access to hard drives from the company.