



**For Immediate Release:**  
December 27, 2023

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## **The American Kratom Association Cites Evidence of Trial Attorney Funding of Anti-Kratom Stories Published in the Tampa Bay Times in Demand for Retraction**

*AKA calls on Tampa Bay Times Editors to (1) Retract and Remove Anti-Kratom Stories, (2) Disclose all Sources and Amounts of Third-Party Funding for the now ethically tainted "Investigation", and (3) submit the stories to an independent entity for review.*

**WASHINGTON, D.C., UNITED STATES, December 27, 2023** – The American Kratom Association (AKA) cited disclosures by a leading trial attorney that the Tampa Bay Times so-called investigation into kratom deaths and kratom vendors received funding support from and collaborated with trial attorneys for the anti-kratom stories. The demand letter called for the newspaper to take immediate steps to remove the tainted stories until an independent review is completed on all possible violations of journalistic ethics.

A social media post has been discovered that was authored by a leading trial attorney who has filed multiple product liability lawsuits against kratom vendors acknowledging the Tampa Bay Times anti-kratom investigative stories received funding from trial lawyers for their stories. The amount of the funding and the number of contributors for this anti-kratom series has not yet been disclosed by the Tampa Bay Times.

"When the concerns were raised about the funding sources and collaboration with trial attorneys for these anti-kratom stories, Rebecca Woolington, Senior Editor for Investigations at the Tampa Bay Times, adamantly denied the anti-kratom stories were funded or supported in any way by trial attorneys," explained Mac Haddow, Senior Fellow on Public Policy for the AKA. "In fact, one trial attorney is now acknowledging funding was given to the Tampa Bay Times for their anti-kratom stories."

In a letter to the Tampa Bay Times editors from AKA's attorney on December 26, demands were made to the Tampa Bay Times to 1) issue a public retraction of all kratom-related stories; 2)

remove those stories from your publication and all digital content; 3) disclose the sources and amounts of third-party funding; and 4) publish a formal statement that these stories and the investigative methods are under review by an independent entity to determine whether the content meets the highest standards required of journalistic evidence.<sup>1</sup>

“It is clear the Tampa Times anti-kratom investigation has serious ethical questions that demand answers that can only be resolved with an independent review,” Haddow concluded. “Allowing the story to remain available on its digital platform is a major violation of the public trust.”

#### ABOUT AKA

The American Kratom Association (AKA), a consumer-based, nonprofit organization, focuses on setting the record straight about kratom and gives a voice to those who are suffering by protecting their rights to possess and consume safe and natural kratom. AKA represents millions of Americans, each of whom has a unique story to tell about the virtues of kratom and its positive effects on their lives.

For more information, visit [www.AmericanKratom.org](http://www.AmericanKratom.org), [www.Kratomanswers.org](http://www.Kratomanswers.org) or [www.Protectkratom.org](http://www.Protectkratom.org). Follow them on Twitter (@TheKratomAssn), Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/Americankratomassociation/>)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>