

POLITICS

Former city Rep. Claudia Rodriguez faces ethics complaint over fuel card usage last year



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El Paso Times

Published 11:36 a.m. MT Aug. 29, 2023

Despite losing her reelection bid, former city Rep. Claudia Rodriguez could face action by the El Paso Ethics Review Commission after a complaint was filed against her this week over her use of her city-issued gas card last year.

Rodriguez spent nearly \$5,300 on 1,459 gallons of gasoline, according to an audit by Chief Internal Auditor Edmundo Calderon.

"The latest complaint submitted against me is proof that this is a political hit job," Rodriguez wrote in a statement. "Why? Because I am no longer in office. My position is, I did nothing wrong and will not be participating in this kangaroo court process."

More: Rep. Cassandra Hernandez reprimanded by ethics commission for her gas card usage

The complaint against Rodriguez was filed Monday morning by Tom Laign, a resident of District 6, which is now represented by city Rep. Art Fierro, who defeated Rodriguez in last year's election.

"Whenever somebody gets elected into public office, they're given a position of public trust," Laign said. "Even when they've left office, as Claudia Rodriguez has done in this case, she still held that public trust while she was still in office."

Laign notes in his complaint a litany of missteps made by Rodriguez, which were originally identified by Chief Internal Auditor Edmundo Calderon in his office's report earlier this year. The report showed three instances of back-to-back fill-ups and two instances of more than 14 gallons being purchased on the same day.

Further, Calderon's report also showed that Rodriguez had used her city fuel card to purchase gas in Van Horn, Fort Stockton and Carlsbad, New Mexico. Calderon determined that Rodriguez was likely filling up multiple vehicles and described her fuel usage as "excessive."

More: El Paso City Council to hold special meeting over members' 'excessive' fuel card use

"Representative Rodriguez's actions are completely unacceptable for an elected representative of the people," Laign wrote in his complaint, "and she must be called to account."

A similar ethic's complaint was filed against District 3 Rep. Cassandra Hernandez. The Ethics Review Commission issued a letter of reprimand against Hernandez for her 2022 fuel card usage.

Hernandez spent \$6,700 in fuel expenses on the taxpayer-funded fuel card. She has since repaid the money.