

October 18, 2017

Dear Honorable Commissioners,

I want to commend the efforts of the Fair Political Practices Commission and investigator George Aradi for all of the work that went toward imposing a fine of \$25,000 on Art Chacon for controlling a committee that according to the law, should have been operating as an independent expenditure committee in the November 2014 Central Basin Municipal Water District Division III Election.

Unfortunately, this punishment falls short of having any significant impact on Mr. Chacon's illegal actions, which it is intended to correct. This \$25,000 fine is as unlikely to compel him to play by the rules any more than the \$30,000 fine levied against him by the FPPC in 2011 for similar violations of the Political Reform Act.

The sad reality is that these fines do not stop cheaters like Mr. Chacon and moneyed influences from putting their thumb on the scale by injecting falsehood and misinformation into elections with the intent to subvert the political process. In this instance, Mr. Chacon won the election by only 2% in a field against five challengers, none of whom violated the FPPC rules.

It seems that to Mr. Chacon these fines are simply another cost of doing business. In all likelihood these fines will be paid by deep pocket donors like the Commerce Casino (a.k.a. California Commerce Club) and billboard company Long Beach Bulletin Displays. What either of these businesses has to do with the water served to Central Basin Municipal Water District constituents remains unclear despite their major financial support of his reelection bid.

In addition, while Mr. Chacon may have agreed to the fines, he has shown a lack of remorse and responsibility based on his claim in a recently published online account that he did not have anything to do with the committee, despite all evidence to the contrary cited in the FPPC report.

It's also worth noting that Arturo Chacon is part of the notorious Chacon political family who have collectively racked up tens of thousands of dollars in FPPC fines over the last decade. They have been deeply involved in much of the political turmoil that assails Southeast Los Angeles, including recalls, scandals, and their politically incestuous relationship with former Senator Ron Calderon who was convicted for accepting bribes in 2016 along with his brother, former Assemblymember Tom Calderon who was convicted for laundering money from those bribes.

Mr. Chacon is a three term elected official who knows better than to violate the Political Reform Act. As such I strongly recommend that the Commission establish or advocate for higher fines to be levied for this kind of behavior along with enhanced penalties for repeat offenders like Mr. Chacon.

Doing so will provide a significant economic disincentive to flout the rules and potentially change the misbehavior that the Political Reform Act was intended to correct, which ultimately cheats voters of transparency and accountability.

Respectfully,

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