

For Immediate Release

Federal Probe Put On Ice

New Haven – City Alderman Sergio Rodriguez engineered a delay in the federal investigation of the Hatch Act matter regarding his 16 month employment at the Housing Authority of the City of New Haven (HANH) by stepping down from his job as a community services manager at Monterey Place. Mr. Rodriguez was awarded his position after he was elected Alderman of Ward 26.

At this time the case remains open at the Hatch Act Unit at the Office of Special Counsel (OSC) in Washington, D.C. where officials are in a holding pattern while Rodriguez seeks new employment. The Hatch Act generally prohibits politicians from running for elected partisan office while employed on projects funded by federal monies or grants. HANH receives HUD grants.

If Rodriguez finds a position not funded with federal dollars, the case will be closed without a final ruling on whether his employment at the Housing Authority was in fact a violation of Federal law. The OSC has the jurisdiction to remove a violator of the Hatch Act from his/her job, but it does not have authority to remove that person from political office. With Rodriguez no longer employed by HANH the OSC would lack any remedy.

The OSC launched its investigation after the New Haven Citizens Action Network (NH CAN) filed an inquiry seeking a ruling on the legality of Rodriguez's job. The Hatch Act OSC escalated the inquiry to "matter" status and opened the investigation.

"Sergio stepping aside may ice the investigation from the federal point of view, but it does nothing to resolve the matter in our minds," says Gary Doyens, a member of NH CAN steering committee. "Sergio has maintained all along, despite evidence to the contrary, he was doing nothing wrong. He knew better and stepping aside is proof of it."

On Monday November 5th, the day before the election, according to the OSC, HANH Executive Director Jimmy Miller phoned the Hatch Act investigator to say that Rodriguez had been laid off. According to the Steering Committee Member of NH CAN who was in direct communication with the investigator, under further questioning Miller recanted saying that Rodriguez had actually resigned his position at HANH. According to the same source, Rodriguez later returned to ask that he be laid off so he could collect unemployment insurance. According to the OSC, Miller laid Rodriguez off stating budgetary constraints- Rodriguez's work as Community Services Manager of Monterey Place was being absorbed into another position at HANH.

Under normal conditions, resignations preclude unemployment compensation. In this case, NH CAN believes Mr. Rodriguez is getting special treatment. He not only had the

benefit of a job for which NH CAN feels he most likely should not have held, but he will now unlawfully receive unemployment compensation at taxpayer expense. NH CAN would like to know if Mr. Miller was complicit in this arrangement and if not, how the “resignation turned lay off” actually transpired.

NH CAN will be requesting an inquiry into the matter by the appropriate Committee of New Haven’s Board of Alderman.

NH CAN is a non-partisan grass roots organization concerned with transparency in City of New Haven government and fiscal responsibility. The website is www.nhcan.org. NH CAN invites residents and property owners in New Haven to participate and join in our accountability efforts.

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