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Ochoa Ethics Concerns Mount as Formal Investigation Expands

Alleged felony offenses now include use of public resources for political campaign advertising

AUSTIN, TX – The ethics investigation into Cameron County Justice of the Peace Benito Ochoa, IV is expanding.

The Texas Ethics Commission (TEC), the state agency tasked with overseeing campaign ethics compliance, has accepted jurisdiction over new sworn claims that Ochoa violated state law by using his private chambers and courtroom bench in a political campaign video he later posted on social media as a paid campaign advertisement.

State law prohibits judges and other elected officials from using government property for personal or political benefit when it “has come into the public servant’s custody or possession by virtue of the public servant’s office or employment.” This provision has long been upheld as prohibiting incumbent officeholders from conducting political campaign activities on government property, a standard clearly violated by Ochoa.

“When a sitting judge doesn’t care about following state ethics laws, only one word comes to mind: guilty,” said Wayne Hamilton, a campaign ethics expert and head of #ProjectRedTX. “Voters have a right to know that this guy who’s supposed to be enforcing the law doesn’t even follow the law himself.”

These latest allegations come on the tails of an already-open TEC investigation into Ochoa’s campaign finance records. He reported accepting multiple corporate financial contributions to his campaign, a third-degree felony which can carry criminal penalties and forfeit the candidate’s ability to hold office, if convicted.

In accordance with state law, the Texas Ethics Commission will continue to investigate the allegations. For more information or to follow the progress of the complaint, visit projectredtx.com.

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