

III. NATURE OF ALLEGED VIOLATION**Page 2**

Include the specific law(s) or rule(s) alleged to have been violated. YOU MUST ALLEGE A VIOLATION OF A LAW THAT IS WITHIN THE COMMISSION'S JURISDICTION. The Texas Ethics Commission has jurisdiction to enforce only the following laws: (1) Title 15 of the Election Code; (2) Chapters 302, 303, 305, 572 and 2004 of the Gov't Code; (3) § 334.025 and § 335.055 of the Local Gov't Code; (4) Chapter 159 of the Local Gov't Code, in connection with a county judicial officer who elects to file a financial statement with the commission; and (5) § 2152.064 and § 2155.003 of the Gov't Code.

*Please completely fill out this form.
Failure to complete this form properly will cause your complaint to be noncompliant and returned.*

Statute violated: Texas Election Code 253.003 (Unlawful Use of Public Funds for Political Advertising)

The statute referenced above prohibits an officer of a political subdivision from authorizing the spending of public funds for political advertising. The Ethics Commission has consistently interpreted this statute as prohibiting the use of public resources for political advertising.

Eloy Vera is an officer of a political subdivision, by virtue of his status as the elected county judge of Starr County, Texas.

On September 12, 2022, Eloy Vera published a video on the official Starr County Facebook page that included his campaign logo (minus the election-related language). Embedded twice in the video was an image identical to Vera's campaign logo, but without text other than "Eloy Vera, Starr County Judge." The image even includes the "check mark" symbol, suggesting that voters mark their ballot for Vera in the upcoming November election.

Vera has used his distinctive "check mark" logo since at least 2014. See this article, which includes a photo of the logo on a billboard (erected without permission of the landowner).

<https://www.valleycentral.com/news/local-news/county-judge-hangs-campaign-sign-on-private-property/>

Vera's political Facebook page contains multiple images of this logo - featuring the same photo of Vera and "check mark" image.

In July 2022, when Vera filed his campaign finance reports (belatedly and using the wrong form), the report included multiple expenditures for signs and banners (presumably using his campaign logo).

The September 12, 2022 video was clearly made and published with Vera's authorization - he prepared a speech, sat for the video, and likely authorized County staff to publish it to Starr County's official Facebook account. As County Judge, Vera is the chief executive of Starr County. Additionally, Vera would have had to provide his campaign logo (or an altered version) for inclusion in the video.

ATTACH ADDITIONAL PAGES AS NEEDED

IV. STATEMENT OF FACTS**Page 3**

You must state the facts constituting the alleged violation(s), including the dates on which or the period of time in which the alleged violation(s) occurred. Identify allegations of fact not personally known to you, but alleged on information and belief. Use simple, concise, and direct statements. You must state facts that, if true, would constitute a violation of a law within the Commission's jurisdiction and allege facts to sufficiently indicate the manner and means by which each alleged violation occurred.

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This misconduct likely also violates Texas Penal Code 39.02 ("Abuse of Office") in that Vera misused "government property, services, personnel, or any other thing of value belonging to the government that has come into the public servant's custody or possession by virtue of the public servant's office or employment." Given the value of the equipment misused, this conduct likely constitutes a felony.

ATTACH ADDITIONAL PAGES AS NEEDED

V. LISTING OF DOCUMENTS AND OTHER MATERIALS

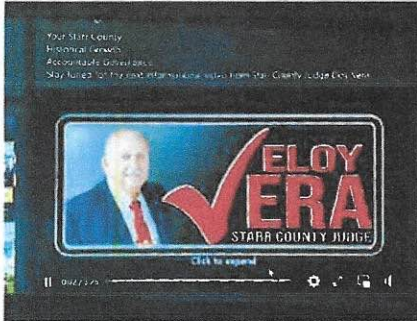
You must list all documents and other materials filed with this complaint. Additionally, list all other documents and other materials that are relevant to this complaint and that are within your knowledge, including their location, if known. Relevant documents that are available to you or in your possession must be included.

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File containing video originally posted at <https://fb.watch/fvcmm8dYey/>

Screenshot of image included in September 12, 2022, official Starr County video:



Vera campaign logo:



Vera 2014 billboard with logo:



ATTACH ADDITIONAL PAGES AS NEEDED

Search



County Judge Eloy Vera sign

LOCAL NEWS

County judge hangs campaign sign on private property

by: Nadia Galindo

Posted: Jan 17, 2014 / 01:30 AM CST

Updated: Jan 17, 2014 / 01:30 AM CST

SHARE

An Escobares family wants a Starr county judge to be charged with trespassing after he allegedly put his campaign sign on their billboard without permission.

The family of Osiel Garza had just returned from Christmas vacation when they found a campaign sign for County Judge Eloy Vera covering their billboard.

“They did not have our permission to enter the premise and do anything to the billboard,” Garza said.

Garza adds the sign had already been rented out to Vera’s political opponent, Lupe Amador.

But due to illness, he had not gotten around to putting his campaign sign up.

Action 4 News discovered a photo on Facebook that shows Judge Vera standing in front of the sign on Garza’s property.

Garza's mother wanted to avoid problems and called Vera herself to resolve the issue.

"Rather than take responsibility for it, he was basically telling her the sign needed to stay up there otherwise it would hurt his image," Garza said.

The sign remained up for eight days until Garza took it down.

We tried calling and visiting Vera's office Thursday but we were unable to get any comment regarding the issue.

"The judge should know better than to allow people to enter somebody else's property without permission," Garza said.

Garza's family filed a police report with Escobares police for trespassing.

Action 4 News contacted police and spoke with the city's mayor.

He said police had no plans of filing any criminal charges against Vera for trespassing on private property.

Garza said the trespassing is an example of abuse of power and wants the judged charged just like any other resident.

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