II. United States

Jose Vega Responds to *Politico* Hit Piece, Reveals Torres Campaign's Financial Conflict of Interest

by Kynan Thistlethwaite

Aug. 4—On July 31, Jose Vega, independent candidate for Congress in New York's 15th Congressional District, issued a statement, "Botched Attack on Jose Vega Reveals Major Financial Conflict of Interest in Ritchie Torres Campaign."

Vega was recently the subject of a hit piece run in the *Politico Playbook*, a weekly national newsletter of the American political online and digital newspaper, *Politico*. The author, Jason Beeferman, describes Vega as "paying himself a modest salary with campaign donor dollars." The amount stated by Beeferman, from January to May 2026, is $2,419 per month. As Vega explains in his statement, that is a gross salary of $26,609, over the 11 months from January until November—the full length of the 2026 congressional campaign cycle. As Vega states, "The poverty line for a single adult in New York City is $23,304. My payments are completely legal. And my 'job,' so to speak, for more than a year, has been to run for office on a full-time basis against AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) candidate Ritchie Torres, who had $14 million dollars before the campaign started."

Jose Vega Instagram

Jose Vega shows a scene from his intervention against Rep. Ritchie Torres.

While Beeferman scrutinizes Vega's meager income, a much bigger scandal regarding Vega's opponent, Ritchie Torres, looms. Mel, a blogger and journalist, has published an article on her Substack, "Ritchie Torres' Fight For Equality."

The Real Graft

Combing through various FEC records of Torres's own campaign finance filings, Mel reveals that campaign funds have been directed to businesses owned by individuals directly in charge of Torres's own finances. Among these is the Equality PAC, the official fundraising arm of the Congressional Equality Caucus, which is co-chaired by Torres, who transferred more

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than $2,270,000 from his joint fundraising committee to the PAC this cycle. The executive director of Equality PAC is Jeff Larivee, who is also the campaign finance director for Ritchie Torres.

Equality PAC has spent an obscene amount of money on consulting fees to companies owned by Jeff Larivee himself. One of these, Rolla Group LLC, a Washington, D.C.-based "boutique fundraising and political consulting firm," founded by Larivee, was paid more than 50% of Equality PAC's own operating expenditures. As if this weren't already a major financial conflict of interest, a company called Rambleside LLC, had billed Equality PAC between $11,750 and $23,000 in rent since last July. The company, owned by Jeff Larivee and his husband, is registered to a $2,000,000 home Larivee bought last July, the same time Rambleside LLC started billing Equality PAC for rent!

Instead of attacking people who are barely above the poverty line, Beeferman should look into what could very well be a major financial conflict of interest by Torres's own campaign staff, says Vega, who concludes his statement:

Courtesy of Jose Vega

Vega confronts Rep. Ritchie Torres on Dec. 23, 2025, at a Bronx restaurant over his support for genocide in both Gaza and Ukraine.

"I'm not going to let the jackals and thieves that are attacking my campaign get away with this. People in Gaza continue to die; people in my district suffer from ludicrous rent costs, collapsing buildings, and poor infrastructure; the Epstein class, whether in the White House, Congress, Wall Street or the South Bronx, continues to operate above the law. Somebody has to stop them before they start World War Three, which could be weeks or even days away. I need you to circulate this statement. I need you to contribute to my campaign. I need you to support my friend Diane Sare in her independent campaign for President of the United States. I need you to vote me into the Congress in November."

For those intrigued, there is much more in Mel's Substack article covering Torres's campaign finances. Readers of *EIR* are encouraged to look at her article.