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When the City Hall bullies came for Campillo



San Diego Councilmember Raul Campillo speaks at a 2024 event at the Plaza de Panama in Balboa Park. (Alejandro Tamayo / The San Diego Union-Tribune)



By **U T EDITORIAL BOARD**

PUBLISHED: December 19, 2025 at 5:36 PM PST

The decision to punish Councilmember Raul Campillo for being the most honest elected leader in City Hall was a fitting coda to a year studded with shabby civic power plays. In [removing](#) Campillo from the influential Land Use and Housing Committee, Council President Joe LaCava depicted the change as routine — not a reaction to Campillo being the [loudest critic](#) of the city's bait-and-switch tactics in forcing through a \$500-plus annual trash collection fee on more than 200,000 local homeowners.

Yeah, sure. LaCava, remember, was one of the leaders of the campaign for Measure B in 2022, which cleared the way for the new trash fee. He and fellow Councilmember Sean Elo-Rivera even told voters before the election it was [“not a rate increase.”](#)

The manipulation of the trash fee narrative to hide the fee's real purpose — shoring up a city budget broken by years of denial about extreme pension and compensation costs — has continued ever since.

In February — after residents expressed [fury](#) when told the trash fee would be far higher than the estimate of \$23 to \$29 a month given to voters in 2022 — Mayor Todd Gloria dismissed [criticism](#). He said the higher cost reflected service levels that residents said they wanted at “hundreds of community meetings,” not the city's fiscal desperation.



Afterwards, City Hall's bullying of residents kept taking new forms.

In March, City Attorney Heather Ferbert betrayed her promise in her 2024 campaign to be an independent voice by taking the [farcical stand](#) that Measure B [required the use](#) of city employees to collect trash — farcical because the City Charter, the equivalent of the city's constitution, says far cheaper private provision of such municipal services [is allowed](#). When do [disbarment hearings](#) begin?

In April, the Gloria administration acted to squelch residents' ability to stop the trash fee under Proposition 218. That 1996 law details how a local fee can be blocked if more than half of those affected by it opposed the fee after receiving a formal notice from the city. But in a city run by Democrats — the party that says it's a moral imperative to make voting as easy as possible — many [residents](#) reported the vague, confusing form sent to them made it difficult.

In June, the power play was capped off by a [6-3 City Council vote](#) approving the fee and setting it at \$43.60, nearly double the low range of what residents were told to expect in 2022.

Six months later, the public's anger has yet to subside. In November — when the editorial board [praised](#) Campillo's call for reforms to make sure residents had honest information about fees they would be voting on and were given an honest chance to block such fees under Proposition 218 — we noted Gloria and a council majority were unlikely to support them. Campillo's punishment confirms this. The events of 2025 show there's no reason for San Diegans to expect most of our elected leaders to do the right thing. They didn't squander our trust. They nuked it.

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