

Exhibit 20

Rodriguez - Yakima council candidate**Author:** Bristol, Chris**Publication info:** Yakima Herald - Republic [Yakima, Wash] 05 Aug 2009: B.1.[ProQuest document link](#)

Abstract: "I think in the public's mind the issue is, can we be trusted? Are we being influenced by something other than what's truly in the community's best interest?" she says. [Sonia Rodriguez] says she also believes putting offenders on work crews would be an effective deterrent: "A lot of people in jail are not used to hard work, and it's hot here in the summer." "I'm also a mother, a lawyer, a homeowner, a business owner. I do bring a different perspective -- not just because I'm a member of the Latino community but because of all those things."

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Full Text: Age: 35 Occupation: Family law attorney Previously held elected office: None Education: Bachelor's degree in philosophy and a law degree, University of Washington. Sonia Rodriguez is only half joking when she says serving on the Yakima City Council is nothing compared to raising a teenage girl. Half joking because her brief tenure on the council has been anything but routine. Since her appointment in December, she has been subjected to put-downs -- she was a feel-good affirmative action pick, that she's too soft-spoken, and that she's a liberal Democrat and trial lawyer who supports amnesty for illegal immigrants. The characterizations seem to overshadow some of her stands on issues. Last month, in the wake of the council's open-meetings controversy, Rodriguez proposed a code of ethics. The council has agreed to draft one. "I think in the public's mind the issue is, can we be trusted? Are we being influenced by something other than what's truly in the community's best interest?" she says. "We need to answer to that. This is a good step in answering how we're going to move forward." Given the wave of violence this summer and the city's financial struggles, one of her priorities is reining in jail costs and developing a more comprehensive approach to gangs and graffiti. Aside from jailing people, she's pushing for more intervention programs and Block Watch. Rodriguez says she also believes putting offenders on work crews would be an effective deterrent: "A lot of people in jail are not used to hard work, and it's hot here in the summer." A single mom who's raising a 13-year-old daughter, she is running hard to retain her seat. She has raised nearly \$3,600 and plans more fundraisers before the primary. During her eight-month tenure, she has been on the losing end of a few issues, most notably the Fire Department's request for a limited paramedic program. She voted against a new budget policy when it was brought up in April but eventually supported it. Rodriguez acknowledges she has a quiet demeanor but says she prefers to listen and gather information before taking a position. She says her remarks at a Cesar Chavez rally earlier this year -- support for civil rights and political empowerment for Latinos -- had nothing to do with amnesty, and that while her mother and law partner is an immigration attorney, she herself specializes in family law. She once served as a Democratic precinct officer but points to her experience as the owner of a law firm and her leadership as a young attorney in the Washington State Bar Association. The digs about affirmative action, she says, "takes away from all those other accomplishments." "I'm also a mother, a lawyer, a homeowner, a business owner. I do bring a different perspective -- not just because I'm a member of the Latino community but because of all those things." Chris Bristol Yakima Herald-Republic

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Exhibit 21

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Yakima council race raises question of whether candidate was too liberal or too Latino

November 06, 2009 12:00 am • By Chris Bristol Yakima Herald-Republic

(0) Comments

YAKIMA, Wash. — Why did Sonia Rodriguez lose her seat on the Yakima City Council when the other three incumbents won by huge margins? Was it the L word?

Take your pick: liberal, Latino, lawyer. Rodriguez, a family law attorney whose appointment to the City Council last December sparked complaints of affirmative action, thinks her narrow loss to KIT-AM radio personality Dave Ettl in Tuesday's election had something to do with all three.

"There's no good reason that makes any sense about why it was so hard for me to keep that seat," she said in an interview Wednesday. "It was such an uphill battle from the start."

On that last part Ettl agrees. Despite Rodriguez's claims to the contrary, Ettl said he believes voters in conservative-heavy Yakima sized her up as a liberal do-gooder and that some of those voters were also offended with the way she was appointed in the first place.

"She was put forward as the ethnic candidate that (Mayor Dave) Edler wanted on the council," he said, "There might have been some backlash."

Edler, who noted 38 percent of Yakima's population is Hispanic when he nominated Rodriguez to be the council's first Latino member earlier this year, did not return repeated phone calls for this story.

Others were not so sure her ethnicity was a factor. Two of the three L words might have been in play, said Max Golladay, head of the Yakima County Republican Party, but "Latino" wasn't one of them.

"The liberal lawyer thing was a bigger negative," he said. "I personally don't know anybody who indicated race was an issue."

Community activist Tony Sandoval said a variety of factors hurt Rodriguez, including low voter turnout and Ettl's name recognition.

But nothing hurt her more than running afoul of the Republican Party, he said.

"When you've got the whole institution of the Republican Party against you, it's tough."

Rodriguez was unfairly labeled a liberal, something that Latinos in general are often labeled, he said.

"We like guns, kids, country. Liberal we're not. That's a label we're fighting not be to stuck with," he

said.

Ettl identifies himself as a conservative, but not a Republican. In fact, he turned down the party's endorsement during the campaign.

Going into Tuesday's election, most City Hall handicappers confidently predicted incumbents Bill Lover, Micah Cawley and Maureen Adkison, an appointee like Rodriguez, would easily overcome their challengers.

And that's exactly what happened. Cawley's race was the closest of the three, and he won convincingly over former mayor Mary Place with 57 percent of the vote. Lover and Adkison both got 65 percent.

The Rodriguez/Ettl contest was harder to predict. Incumbents usually have the edge, but Rodriguez's appointment had been controversial from the beginning while Ettl enjoyed a huge advantage in name recognition.

That advantage, however, was offset by a roller-skating injury just before the August primary. Ettl fell and broke his ankle which developed into serious complications.

Laid up for weeks at home and then confined to a wheelchair for the duration of the campaign, Ettl said he became increasingly worried that his vow to be a low-key "uncandidate" was backfiring.

Rodriguez, meanwhile, began to come on as Election Day neared. She spurred the City Council to adopt an ethics code in the midst of an public-meetings dispute, then won headlines with her aggressive stance on crime and gang violence.

She also raised a lot of money — more than \$24,000, included the value of an equal air time arrangement with Ettl's employer, Gap West Broadcasting.

Still, her Democratic connections dogged her throughout the campaign. Her critics noted that she was a Democratic precinct officer in 2006 and received a \$200 campaign donation from the state Democratic party.

As the campaign wore on, Rodriguez said she was never active in the party and regretted serving as a precinct officer. She said she was not sure if she ever even attended a meeting.

Regardless of party affiliation, she said her actions on council were clearly not those of a liberal, leading her to wonder why voters would choose Ettl. In joint campaign appearances, Ettl frequently adopted a wait-and-see attitude, and the two were rarely far apart on the issues.

"Is coming down hard on gang members liberal? Is putting prisoners to work liberal?" she asked. "You really have to wonder what's going on here. There has to be some other reason."

Lover, the council's leading conservative, agreed with Ettl that Rodriguez may have been victimized by a simmering backlash over the way she was appointed.

Even so, he said he doubted race played a significant role in the voting and credited her increasing confidence in the last three months of the campaign for nearly closing the gap. She had finished 11 points behind Ettl in the primary.

"I thought she was really growing" politically, he said. "She took on the crime issue, and I respect her for that. There's going to be a lot of things done that she's initiated."

Vickie Ybarra, Yakima school board president and a supporter of Rodriguez, said she was disappointed in the outcome but doesn't think it was the result of ethnic prejudice. She also supported former school superintendent Ben Soria, a Mexican-American who was trounced by Lover.

"I was disappointed of course that some folks I thought were really fine candidates didn't win, but I have great respect for the will of the voters and there are serious issues our city council has to face," Ybarra said.

Paul George, a former mayor and head of the local Democratic Party who was easily defeated by Adkison, suggested race has been a factor in local politics before.

"I'm going back into history. Draw your own conclusions," said George, referring to lawyer Victor Lara and other unsuccessful Latino candidates. In 1998, Lara was appointed by Gov. Gary Locke to an opening on the Yakima County Superior Court bench but was quickly defeated by James Lust that same year.

"Diversity is something we need," he said. "To me, it's very clear that unless you're member of the club, it's very difficult to get elected in this city.

"I really think the citizens should think about electing four city council members by district vote only, not city wide. It's a shame that nobody other than Rick Ensey is on the City Council that is east of 40th Avenue. I really think we should look at that. We can't keep doing this where one side of the city dominates the other."

But Ettl said he is confident that ethnicity wasn't a factor and that a more conservative Hispanic appointee might have won over voters.

"The timing is getting right for Yakima," he said. "The scenario right now is left vs. right, not Anglo vs. Latino."

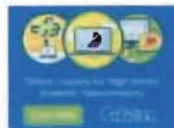
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