



International Brotherhood of Police Officers

A DIVISION OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

The Holyoke Police Supervisors' Union, Local #409, and the Holyoke Police Patrolmen's Union, Local #388 respectfully submit this request for an advisory ethics opinion regarding Holyoke City Councilor Israel Rivera's continued participation in matters directly affecting the Holyoke Police Department.

Publicly reported accounts on social media and in local media outlets describe a concerning interaction between Councilor Rivera and members of the Massachusetts State Police that reportedly resulted in his arrest on December 20, 2025, in Holyoke. This incident is documented in an official police report and was reportedly captured on Massachusetts State Police body-worn cameras.

It is our understanding that during this encounter, Councilor Rivera made statements invoking his elected position and referencing his authority over police funding. The police report states, in part: *"I'm a City Councilor; you can't really work with me?"* and *"That's fine, I'll just cut the budget,"* followed by *"Everyone else gets a pass but I don't?"* Regardless of the ultimate disposition of any criminal or civil proceedings, such statements—if accurately reported—raise serious concerns regarding the appearance of bias, retaliation, or animosity toward law enforcement.

Councilor Rivera currently participates in deliberations and votes involving police staffing levels, departmental oversight, and funding. His continued involvement in these matters under the circumstances described above raises concerns about impartiality and public trust.

Additionally, Councilor Rivera reportedly used offensive racial slurs during this incident, including statements that are deeply troubling and inconsistent with the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Such language, if accurately reported, erodes public confidence in local leadership and undermines the trust essential to effective governance—particularly in a city as diverse as Holyoke. Elected officials bear a heightened responsibility to uphold these values, and failure to do so warrants appropriate scrutiny.



Local #409 and Local #388 are concerned that Councilor Rivera's continued participation in police-related matters may create, at minimum, the appearance of a conflict of interest, potentially undermining:

- Public confidence in fair and impartial governance;
- The perceived legitimacy of police funding, staffing, and oversight decisions; and
- Labor relations between the City of Holyoke and its public safety employees.

Ethics standards and best practices consistently recognize that even the appearance of bias or retaliatory intent—regardless of proof of actual intent—may warrant recusal to preserve institutional integrity and public trust.

Accordingly, we respectfully request:

1. Written ethical guidance as to whether Councilor Rivera's continued participation in police-related matters presents an actual or apparent conflict of interest; and
2. Written guidance as to whether recusal from police-related votes, discussions, or oversight responsibilities would be appropriate to safeguard impartiality and public confidence.

This request is submitted in good faith and with the goal of avoiding unnecessary escalation, potential litigation exposure, or further erosion of trust between elected officials and public safety professionals. We respectfully request a timely written response.

Sincerely,

Holyoke Police Supervisors' Union, Local #409

Holyoke Police Patrolmen's Union, Local #388