

EDITORIAL: Chavez's phony excuse violates public trust

Luis Chavez

FRESNO BEE FILE

When voters mark their ballots for a candidate, they are placing their trust in that person.

It's understood that there will be times that the voter and the candidate, if elected to office, will disagree on issues and particular legislative votes. But there's also an expectation that the office holder will speak plainly and truthfully and, most of all, be accountable for his or her actions.

Luis Chavez, who is challenging state Sen. Andy Vidak, for the 14th state Senate District seat, knows about this compact between voters and politicians. Chavez is both chief of staff to Fresno City Council Member Sal Quintero and an elected member of the Fresno Unified School District Board of Trustees.

In the final days before voters go to the polls, it has become clear that Chavez violated the public's trust with his changing stories about why he was absent from two of four recent school board meetings and arrived late for the Oct. 29 meeting.

Fresno Unified officials said this week that Chavez called in sick for the two board meetings he missed. The truth, as reported in a story Friday by The Bee's John Ellis and Hannah Furfaro, is that Chavez was campaigning and meeting with Gov. Jerry Brown in Sacramento the day of the Oct. 15 school board meeting that he missed.

Instead of admitting the obvious — that he placed a higher priority on his campaign activities than his school board responsibilities — Chavez said that when he returned to Fresno from Sacramento, "I didn't feel that great, so I said I couldn't make it" to the school board meeting that evening.

The dog probably ate Chavez's homework, too.

Chavez accepted his stipend for the two missed board meetings. Only after being questioned by Bee reporters did he tell Fresno Unified to cut his \$1,500 stipend by half for this month.

Questions also have been raised by Vidak's camp about Chavez's time away from his City Hall job during the campaign. Chavez says that everything is above board and his use of vacation and personal leave benefits were approved by the city of Fresno's human resources department.

City Hall has declined to provide information about how much vacation and leave time Chavez had accumulated, saying it would violate Chavez's privacy. But there is nothing to stop Chavez from providing this pertinent information so that voters are assured everything is in order.

We recommended Chavez to voters because we believed he would better represent the people of the 14th District than Vidak. However, we are highly disappointed in his manufactured explanation for at least one of his school-board



absences.

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