



Written by

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## John Benoit demands Adam Sanchez clarify political mailer

**Riverside County supervisor named in mailer backs sender's opponent in Desert Hot Springs mayor race**



*Riverside County Supervisor John Benoit and Desert Hot Springs City Councilman Adam Sanchez are seen in this file photo combination. Benoit is demanding a public clarification from Sanchez, who is running for mayor and used the supervisor's name in a political mailer. / Desert Sun file photos*

**DESERT HOT SPRINGS** — Riverside County Supervisor John Benoit is demanding a public clarification from Desert Hot Springs Councilman Adam Sanchez after the mayoral candidate used Benoit's name in [political mail](#).

The mailer, paid for by Sanchez's campaign, says the councilman "worked hard to establish city relations with Congressman (Raul) Ruiz, Assemblyman (V. Manuel) Pérez and Supervisor Benoit to bring new resources to our city."

At least one other campaign flier has a similar reference.

**FULL TEXT:** [Adam Sanchez political mailer \(PDF\)](#)

Benoit says it is an inaccurate characterization of their relationship and that it implies a political endorsement. Benoit has instead backed incumbent Mayor Yvonne Parks in the Nov. 5 contest.

"It's more political etiquette. You don't use someone's name in a mailer unless you have their endorsement or permission. He had neither," Benoit said Monday. "We know each other but have not worked closely with each other. It was something he should not have done."

Sanchez and his campaign secretary did not return several calls or an email seeking comment Monday.

But Desert Hot Springs Councilman Russell Betts — Sanchez's political ally who helped gather information for the mailer — defended the content.

"I think it says (Sanchez)works hard to establish city relations. That's the operative word. ... There's nothing for him to retract," said Betts, adding he's been in two meetings with Sanchez and Benoit.

"This is political fodder. It does not say anywhere on the page 'endorsed by.' It says 'established city relations.' "

Sanchez is two years into his first four-year term, so the Democrat will retain a council seat regardless of the election results. Parks, first elected mayor in 2007, is also challenged by local economist John Paul Valdez.

This is not the first time a mayoral mailer has sparked controversy in Desert Hot Springs for implying someone's support.

In 2009, when Betts tried to unseat Parks, his campaign mailer included a photo of himself with then-city manager Rick Daniels at the local soccer park.

Daniels, as a city official, did not make public endorsements and was "livid" because he thought it provided a misleading impression.

The mailer had been sent to some 2,600 Desert Hot Springs voters. Betts, who said a volunteer picked the image, had it swapped out before it was sent to 2,400 additional voters.

It was not known Monday how many people in Desert Hot Springs received the mailer.

Benoit, a Bermuda Dunes Republican, told The Desert Sun the first time he knew about the mailer was when it was sent to him over the weekend. By Monday, he had not received a call back from Sanchez seeking an explanation.

"I'm disappointed," Benoit said of the mailer. "He has not returned my calls, which unfortunately is consistent with my previous relationship with him."

The mailer also states Sanchez worked with former Rep. Jerry Lewis, a Redlands Republican, and "brought home the first \$3 million in federal funds to get our new Health and Wellness Center started."

Lewis' longtime spokesman, Jim Specht, said funding came in installments between 2005 — before Sanchez was elected — and ending in 2010. Previous Desert Sun reports show Sanchez worked on the issue as then-director of the local Boys & Girls Club.

Lewis "would not have worked with one particular council member. He would have worked with all of the council members," Specht said.

"I'm not aware that he formally endorsed anyone in Desert Hot Springs," Specht added. "He did his best to avoid any endorsements in local races. ... On the other hand, he has never been outraged or unhappy with people saying they had worked with him as part of their campaign literature."

The mailer also quotes Dan Gibbons, a Desert Hot Springs real estate broker who worked with Sanchez at the Boys & Girls Club.

Gibbons told The Desert Sun on Monday that he didn't say the comments attributed to him, but that he agrees with the sentiment.

"This is the first time I've heard what the flier said," said Gibbons, who is backing Sanchez's race. "I never said that to anybody and I never told anybody that. But I think he'll do a good job."

Pérez, a Coachella Democrat, told The Desert Sun on Thursday that he wasn't endorsing candidates for the November council races because no one asked him. But on Monday, his political spokesman said Pérez had endorsed Sanchez months ago.

Ruiz's campaign spokesman, Roy Behr, said "the congressman has not endorsed in that race."

“But we don’t feel like that document implies an endorsement and we don’t have a problem with it,” he added.

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