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KARA A. MEDRANO

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
WESTERN DIVISION**

KARA A. MEDRANO, an individual

Plaintiff,

vs.

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES, a public entity;
LINDA SANCHEZ, an individual;
CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE OF
REPRESENTATIVE LINDA
SANCHEZ, a public entity; and
YVETTE SHAHINIAN, an individual,
inclusive,

Defendants.

CASE NO.:

COMPLAINT

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

1. WRONGFUL TERMINATION
AND RETALIATION IN
VIOLATION OF PUBLIC
POLICY;
2. VIOLATION OF CALIFORNIA
LABOR CODE SECTION 1102.5;
3. INTENTIONAL INFLICTION OF
EMOTIONAL DISTRESS;
4. TORTIOUS INTERFERENCE
WITH PROSPECTIVE BUSINESS
RELATIONS;
5. CONVERSION;
6. TRESPASS TO CHATTEL;

7. VIOLATION OF FIRST AMENDMENT;
8. VIOLATION OF FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT;
9. DEFAMATION; AND
10. VIOLATION OF FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (29 U.S.C. §§ 2615, 2617(a)).

COMES NOW, Plaintiff KARA A. MEDRANO ("Plaintiff") and states and alleges her Complaint against Defendant UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, Defendant LINDA SANCHEZ, Defendant CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE OF REPRESENTATIVE LINDA SANCHEZ, and Defendant YVETTE SHAHINLAN, inclusive, (collectively, "Defendants") as follows:

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

1. In the United States of America, a democracy, a "public office is a public trust." All members of Congress are elected under this premise and are bound by these words. The United States House of Representatives Ethics Committee is trusted with ensuring that all the members of Congress abide by the ethical standards established by said Committee. Congressmember Linda Sanchez, a former labor lawyer, is the highest ranking member of the Democratic Party on the House Ethics Committee. In fact, Congressmember Sanchez, as a ranking member of the Ethics Committee, is entrusted with the duty to uphold the ethical standards in the House by ensuring that the public office, and each of its members, operate within the ethical standards established by the House Ethics Committee. However, Congressmember Sanchez has violated and continues to violate the ethical rules that the House has entrusted her to uphold and police. For instance, in direct violation of the House Ethics Rules, Congressmember Sanchez:

- Spent taxpayer money on campaigning and campaign fund raising;
- Instructed the Congressional staff to delete and destroy all campaign-related computer documents and file from the official office in preparation for an audit;
- Violated Ethics hiring practices by hiring her 2014 campaign manager onto her Congressional Office staff in 2015 with the understanding that he was being hired to ultimately take on a campaigning position for a different political race that she was planning on entering;
- Expressly prohibited Congressional employees working in her office to complain about the unethical practices in which her office was engaged or to bring any other ethical complaints to the attention of the House Ethics Committee.

Congressmember Sanchez's conduct breached all levels and bounds of the public trust in direct violation of the very ethical laws that Congressman Sanchez's Committee is tasked with enforcing. It has been well established long over a century ago, as Henry Clay declared:

Government is a trust, and the officers of the government are trustees; and both the trust and the trustees are created for the benefit of the people.¹

This case involves a disturbing breach of this trust and abuse of Congressman Linda Sanchez' ethical duties to her constituents, to the Congress, to her employees, and of her legislative powers.

JURISDICTION

2. This case is brought pursuant to, *inter alia*, the First, Fifth, and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution; *Bivens v. Six Unknown Named Agents of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics*, 403 U.S. 388 (1971); the Federal

¹ Henry Clay, Speaker of the House of Representatives during 1811-1814, 1815-1820, and 1823-1825.

1 Tort Claims Act, 28 U.S.C. § 2671 et seq.; the Family and Medical Leave Act of
 2 1993, 29 U.S. C. 2611 through 2615. This Court has jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. §§
 3 1331 and 2201; 28 U.S.C § 1332; 28 U.S.C. § 2671; 29 U.S. C. 2611 through 2615; 2
 4 U.S.C. 1301, et seq.

5 3. Plaintiff completed pre-litigation counseling pursuant to 2 U.S.C. §
 6 1402 and pre-litigation mediation pursuant to 2 U.S.C. § 1403. On December 4,
 7 2015, Plaintiff completed the administrative remedies pursuant to the Congressional
 8 Accountability Act of 1995. (Exhibit A.) Medrano has, thus, exhausted her
 9 administrative remedies for purposes of her claims under the Congressional
 10 Accountability Act of 1995. *See* 2 U.S.C. §§ 1402, 1403.

11 4. By letter dated October 5, 2015, the Congressional Office of Linda
 12 Sanchez informed Plaintiff that her administrative claims under the Federal Tort
 13 Claims Act (FRCA) have been denied. (Attached as Exhibit B.) Medrano has thus
 14 exhausted her administrative remedies for purposes of her claims under the FRCA.
 15 *See* 28 U.S.C. § 2675, 1346.

16 5. Venue is proper in the Central District of California because a
 17 substantial part of the events complained of and giving rise to Plaintiff's claims
 18 occurred in this District. *See* 28 U.S.C. 1391(b), 1391(e), 1402(b).

19 PARTIES

20 6. At all times material herein, Plaintiff Kara Medrano was a resident of
 21 the County of Los Angeles, State of California and worked in Los Angeles County.

22 7. At all times material herein, Defendant Linda Sanchez has been and is
 23 the United States Representative for the 38th District of California and, accordingly,
 24 is a resident of the County of Los Angeles, State of California. She is a named
 25 defendant in her official capacity and/or as an individual acting with the color of
 26 federal authority and/or acting for her own individual purposes outside the course
 27 and scope of her official capacity.

28 8. At all times material herein, Congressional Office of Linda Sanchez

1 operated from Cerritos, California and Washington, District of Columbia as the
2 Office includes two geographic locations: one of the offices is located at 17906
3 Crusader Avenue, Suite 100, Cerritos, CA 90703 (hereinafter, "Cerritos Office");
4 and the other office is located at 2329 Rayburn HOB, Washington, DC 20515
5 (hereinafter, "DC Office").

6 9. On information and belief, Ivette Shahinian was and is a resident of the
7 County of Los Angeles, State of California and worked in Los Angeles County.

8 **FACTS APPLICABLE TO ALL CAUSES OF ACTION**

9 10. Plaintiff Kara A. Medrano is a talented and loyal public servant who has
10 dedicated her career to serving her community. To this end, in January 2011,
11 Medrano commenced employment as a Senior Field Representative in
12 Congressman Sanchez's Cerritos office. Beginning July 2014 when Ivette
13 Shahinian became the District Director, Medrano began reporting to Shahinian. As
14 soon as Shahinian became the District Director, Medrano noticed changes in the
15 office that were not in compliance with the Congressional Accountability Act and
16 other laws governing the conduct of a Congressional Office including hiring
practices and mismanagement of government funds.

17 11. For instance, on July 25, 2014, Medrano walked into Shahinian's office
18 to tell her that she was going on her lunch break. Upon entering her office, Medrano
19 noticed that Shahinian was working on her personal laptop and was on the telephone
20 talking about campaign related activity – she was talking to someone about the dollar
21 amount of campaign donations and the identities of the campaign donors. As
22 Medrano stood in Shahinian's office, she quickly got off the phone. At this time,
23 Medrano informed Shahinian that she should conduct any campaign related work
24 upstairs in the campaign office rather than conducting it in the congressional office.
25 In response, Shahinian ordered Medrano to close the office door, after which she
26 proceeded to scold Medrano, advising Medrano that Shahinian can do whatever she
27 wants in her office and her conducting fund raising there was none of Medrano's

1 business. Taken aback by this attack, Medrano corrected Shahinian, responding that
2 conduct and actions in the Congressman's office affects everyone working in that
3 office, including Congressman Sanchez herself, as all of them are required to
4 follow their ethical duties and all fund raising laws.

5 12. After leaving Shahinian's office, Medrano emailed her and asked her for
6 the contact information for the Congressional Office of Personal Management
7 ("OPM") – the office which handles complaints of ethical violations. Shahinian
8 failed to reply to her email. Instead, to prevent Medrano's complaints from being
9 lodged with OPM and to ensure that there was no paper trail, Shahinian called
10 Medrano and told her that Congressman Sanchez was on the phone for her.
11 During the phone conversation, Medrano told Congressman Sanchez about the
12 inappropriate activity that she had observed: that Shahinian was conducting
13 campaign fund-raising activity at the official Congressional office time while
14 utilizing official Congressional resources. During this complaint to
15 Congressman Sanchez, Medrano concentrated on the fact that Shahinian's
16 actions directly impacted and affected Congressman Sanchez. Congressman
17 Sanchez agreed that Shahinian should not be conducting campaign work in the
18 official office and informed Medrano that she would explain this to Shahinian.
19 However, Congressman Sanchez then informed Medrano that she fully supports
20 Shahinian, explaining that she chose Shahinian for that position. Congressman
21 Sanchez then warned Medrano that she needs to listen to what Shahinian tells her to
22 do, because Shahinian is her boss. In addition, and much to Medrano's shock and
23 disappointment, Congressman Sanchez expressly told Medrano that she is
24 prohibited from contacting OPM/Ethics committee regarding the ethical violations
25 that took place in Congressman Linda Sanchez' office. Congressman
26 Sanchez also ordered Medrano to bring all of her ethical concerns to her only. At the
27 time of this conversation with Congressman Sanchez, Congressman Sanchez
28 was and continues to be the highest ranking Democrat in the House Ethics

1 Committee, a fact which both troubled and intimidated Medrano.

2 13. Only days after her conversation with Congressman Sanchez
3 regarding the unethical conduct in the official office, on or around August 6, 2015,
4 Shahinian called a meeting with the entire office staff. At the meeting, Shahinian
5 instructed the staff to delete all emails and documents that contain anything that may
6 be incriminating regarding fund raising or campaigning using Congressional
7 resources or any other campaigning or fund raising information off of their
8 computers. She explained that ethics computer audit by the House Ethics Committee
9 was impeding and everyone needed to delete any such documents from their
10 computers prior to the audit. She also instructed the Director of Community
11 Outreach, Angelina Mancillas, who also takes on all the IT responsibilities in the
12 local district office to "wipe out" all electronic footprints from staff and intern
13 computers after staff had deleted the files related to fund raising and campaigning
14 from the Congressional computers. Mancillas and Medrano called out Shahinian's
15 instructions as inappropriate, but Shahinian was adamant in her instructions.
16 Mancillas stated that "wiping out" all these computer files and data information from
the computers was not a good idea.

17 14. Due to Medrano's complaints about the fund raising, campaigning and
18 ethical violations, in around September 2014, Defendants turned Medrano's life at
19 work upside down, by dramatically changing the way they treated her, to
20 intentionally make her work environment more and more intolerable. A few
21 examples include: Medrano sent an email to Shahinian about a possible small
22 business visit for Congressman Sanchez to attend. Shahinian summarily denied
23 the request. Shahinian belittled Medrano during weekly staff meetings, treated her
24 differently from all other staff, denied her lunch breaks, and assigned District
25 Scheduler Annette Medcalk to surveille and record Medrano's arrival and departure
26 from the office even though no other staff member was treated in this manner.

27 15. Shahinian escalated her retaliation. On or around September 29, 2014,
28

1 Shahinian used Medrano's pregnancy leave against her when Medrano requested
2 vacation time. She submitted a time off request for October 29 and October 31 of
3 2014. In response, Shahinian snapped at Medrano that she had already taken enough
4 time off for 2014 for her maternity leave. Medrano requested that Shahinian put this
5 reasoning in writing. Shahinian, of course, refused. In denying Shahinian's
6 Medrano's request for days off, Shahinian explained: "comp days are granted at the
7 discretion of the District Director."

8 16. Continuing to be concerned about the cover up of the ethical violations,
9 Medrano escalated her complaints to Chief of Staff Lea Sulkala Fisher. Medrano
10 forwarded an email to Fisher letting her know of the retaliatory, unfair treatment she
11 was receiving from Shahinian because she complained about using official office for
12 campaign fund raising. Medrano requested the opportunity to discuss the retaliation
13 as it was surpassing all bounds of decency. Fisher acknowledged Shahinian's
14 unreasonable behavior and informed Medrano to resubmit her vacation request to
15 Fisher, which Medrano did, only this time her same request for vacation days were
16 granted.

17 17. On October 9, 2014, Medrano sent Fisher the July 25 and August 6
18 incidents. Medrano informed Fisher that she told Shahinian that she was using
19 official office for campaigning which she was not permitted to do, that Shahinian had
20 all the computers "wipe out" to ensure the deletion all campaign activities, including
21 fund raising that took place in the official office. Medrano also explained to Fisher
22 that after her conversation with Congressman Sanchez on July 25, Shahinian
23 began retaliating against her in the terms of her employment, treating her less
24 favorably than others and by ostracizing her to create an intolerable workplace.

25 18. Nevertheless, Shahinian did not stop her attacks against Medrano: she
26 continued to single her out, to ridicule her, and to take away important
27 responsibilities among other forms of retaliation. The following is a non-exhaustive
28 list of incidents that took place in retaliation of Medrano's complaints of unethical

1 and unlawful conduct in Congressman Sanchez's official office:

2 19. On or around October 23, 2014, Medrano was the project manager for
3 the Congressman's Veteran's Roundtable Event. A few days before the event,
4 Shahinian hosted angry anti-immigration protesters in our office and as was
5 witnessed, the protesters grabbed all the printed flyers for the Veteran's roundtable
6 with the intention to crash the Congressman's event. Medrano found out about
7 the situation from this witness, another staff member. As a result, two days before the
8 Veteran's event, Medrano emailed Shahinian about the anti-immigration protesters'
9 plan and requested 5 staff members to be at the event 1.5 hours before the event
10 starts to ensure that any attempted disruption of the event by the protesters could and
11 would be contained. But Shahinian summarily denied Medrano's request for
12 additional staff. As a direct result, Medrano and the event were overwhelmed with
13 protesters trying to sabotage the event, causing chaos that reflected poorly on
14 Medrano.

15 20. The same day, Shahinian emailed Medrano and accused her of not
16 notifying her about upcoming projects and/or issues regarding Army Corp and the
17 City of South El Monte. Medrano emailed her back with a diligent report that
18 Shahinian ignored.

19 21. On or around November 6, 2014, Medrano left the Cerritos office at
20 5:00 pm to attend an event in Whittier at 6:30 pm. On her way to the event, she
21 received an aggressive phone call from Shahinian demanding answers to questions,
22 such as: "Why did you leave the office so early? Why did you not ask for my
23 permission? Why did you not tell me you are leaving? Don't you know I'm your
24 boss? Who told you that you can leave the office without my permission? Who told
25 you that you can attend family matters without my permission? Etc." Medrano tried
26 to explain to the situation to Shahinian, but Shahinian ignored and interrupted
27 Medrano's statements and continued to yell at her, culminating in Shahinian hanging
28 up on her with a slam of the phone.

1 22. Medrano escalated this incident to Fisher the next day via email. But
2 rather than investigate or otherwise consider the complaint, Fisher ratified
3 Shahinian's retaliation.

4 23. On or around November 25, 2014, Medrano escalated Shahinian's
5 harassing and retaliatory actions towards her to Congressmember Sanchez during her
6 JFTB visit. Congressmember Sanchez did not directly address Medrano's complaints
7 except stating she would talk to Shahinian. Congressmember Sanchez proceeded to
8 require Medrano to drive her around for her personal errands during official
9 congressional time despite Medrano's objections based on the fact that she had work
10 to do in the office. Congressmember Sanchez required Medrano to take her to
11 deposit a check at a teachers credit union in, then to Macy's to pay a bill and to look
12 for a Christmas outfit for upcoming Christmas pictures.

13 24. As things continued to get worse, Medrano was crushed that both
14 Congressmember Sanchez and Shahinian were not only allowing, but also actively
15 and openly participating in the scheme to use official Congressional resources for
16 personal matters and fund raising in direct violation of the laws of the United States
17 of America.

18 25. The unethical and illegal conduct in the office continued and heightened
19 with time. On or around December 3, 2014, just days after Medrano complained to
20 Congressmember Sanchez about the unethical and illegal use of official funds and
21 time by Shahinian for campaigning, campaign fund-raising and personal matters,
22 Congressmember Sanchez hired her campaign manager Christian Kropff in the
23 official congressional office in order to secure his employ for her use in a possible
24 run for the Los Angeles County Supervisor's race for the Fourth District. Despite the
25 fact that she later decided not to run, Congressmember Sanchez kept Kropff on
26 payroll: he was hired part-time in the official office and the rest of the time he
27 continued to work in the campaign office. Despite the fact that Kropff was part time
28 in the official office, he almost exclusively conducted campaign work in the official

1 office.

2 26. As with the unethical and illegal conduct, Shahinian's harassment and
3 retaliation against Medrano also increased. On December 18, 2014, Shahinian gave
4 Medrano a 3 page retaliatory written reprimand where she falsely accused Medrano
5 of declining work performance. This was the first time in her three years of
6 employment that Medrano received any negative criticism of her work performance.

7 27. Defendants also continued on the same course of unethical and illegal
8 conduct. Kropff's position and work requirements were at the pinnacle of violating
9 the ethical code of conduct for any congressional office in the United States. For
10 example, Shahinian mandated Christian Kropff to help her submit delegates for the
11 Democratic State Convention. On a day where Kropff should have been working in
12 the official office, she told him to work on campaign related projects because of a
13 strict deadline she had neglected to meet. As Medrano shared an office with Kropff,
14 Kropff often confided in her that he was very uncomfortable with the campaign
15 assignments Shahinian and others gave him while he was employed with the
16 Congressional office, since they were not in compliance with the laws governing a
17 congressional office. Kropff lamented the fact that he was reporting to Shahinian on
18 campaign matters while Shahinian was working in official capacity. When Kropff
19 raised this issue with Fisher, Shahinian was outraged and reprimanded him,
20 explaining to him that he could only complain to her. As others in the office noticed
21 the retaliation against Kropff, they began commenting that Kropff was becoming
22 "the new Medrano," referencing the retaliation and mistreatment of Medrano.

23 28. By February 2015, Medrano realized that she could not continue to
24 complain internally, as nothing was being done to either investigate or correct the
25 violations. On or about February 3, 2015, right before 8:30 a.m., Medrano called the
26 Congressional Ethics Committee from her office phone. She spoke with Patrick
27 McMuller and inquired about filing a complaint against a congressional district
28 office for unethical/illegal conduct including:

- a. District Director accepting gifts during Christmas;
- b. District Director instructing and requiring deleting of all campaign files from the staff computers in the official office;
- c. Violating Congressional Accountability Act;
- d. Violating the hiring practices by hiring the 2014 campaign manager and promising him a position on a different campaign;

29. McMuller informed Medrano that she had to go to the office in Washington D.C. personally to file the complaint or send an email. Medrano told him that she absolutely has to stay anonymous given the severe retaliation she had already suffered. But McMuller stood firm.

30. On or around February 10, 2015, Medrano attempted to again ask for Fisher's assistance to deal with Shahinian's harassment and retaliation. She informed Fisher that Shahinian continued to ridicule her, made her the brunt of jokes, yelled at her, challenged her competency in front of others, and other actions designed to make Medrano's work environment absolutely intolerable. Medrano also informed Fisher that the conditions of her employment were so terrible that she had to seek out mental health services and legal services. Fisher assured her that they are aware of the problem and they are working on improving the issues.

31. Thirteen days after Medrano spoke with Fisher, Defendants summarily fired her during a call conference in which Medrano again complained about the unethical and illegal conduct in the congressional district office.

32. Defendants even refused Medrano the opportunity to retrieve her personal belongings, physically and abruptly removing her from the office upon firing her. Medrano contacted Congressman Sanchez and requested her personal belongings to be returned to her. Upon finally receiving a box of her personal belongings -- which did not include many of her items Defendants had forced her to leave behind -- it was obvious that Defendants intentionally and completely trashed her property. Some of the items were smashed, some were otherwise ruined, and all

1 of them were covered in rotten trashcan and food-item goop.

2 33. The post-termination retaliation did not end there. At this juncture, it is
3 evident that Congressmember Sanchez is determined to take any actions which she
4 feel with destroy Medrano's career. For instance, Medrano was sought out to apply
5 to work in a Supervisor's Office. She was immediately offered an interview, which
6 went exceedingly well, but the following day, the Supervisor met with
7 Congressmember Sanchez, which put an end of Medrano's chances of obtaining a
8 position with said Supervisor. Congressmember Sanchez is actively ensuring that
9 Medrano never gets a position in politics again.

10 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

11 **Wrongful Termination and Retaliation in Violation of Public Policy**

12 (Against All Defendants)

13 34. Plaintiff hereby repeats and realleges each and every allegation contained
14 in each paragraph of this complaint and incorporates same by reference with the same
15 force and effect as though set forth in full at this point.

16 35. This cause of action arises under the public policies of the United States of
17 America and the State of California. These public policies include, without limitation,
18 statutes and regulations prohibiting and regulating the co-mingling of fund raising
19 duties with Congressional duties, public officials accepting gifts, accepting favors or
20 benefits that might be construed as influencing the performance of governmental
21 duties, making private promises binding on the duties of the office, keeping campaign
22 funds separate from personal funds, converting campaign funds to personal use,
23 retaliation due to engaging in a protected activity, among other laws and regulations.
24 Defendants' employment retaliation against Plaintiff who vocally complained was
25 against these public policies of the United States and the State of California.

26 36. As alleged herein and set forth in more detail above, during Plaintiff's
27 employment, she discovered that Defendants had a scheme and practice of violating the
28 United States House Ethics Manual passed by the United States House of

1 Representatives where Defendant Sanchez serves as a member of the Democratic Party
 2 in using public funds for campaigning and fund raising, using public servants for
 3 campaigning and fund raising, using the Congressional office for campaign and fund
 4 raising purposes, deleting campaign and fund-raising related files from the computers
 5 prior an audit, covering up this unethical, illegal conduct, blocking and taking actions to
 6 block complaints of this unethical/illegal conduct to the proper authorities. Defendant
 7 Sanchez is the highest ranking member of the Democratic Party on the U.S. House
 8 Ethics Committee which policies the enforcement of the House Ethics Manual thereby
 9 Defendant Sanchez was in the best position to know that such conduct was in violation
 10 of the policies drafted by members of the United States House of Representatives. As a
 11 direct result of these complaints, Defendants engaged in retaliation in violation of
 12 public policy against Plaintiff in terms and conditions of employment, including, as
 13 mere examples, refusing to allow her to perform her job, removing authority and
 14 responsibility from Plaintiff, undermining and belittling Plaintiff, treating Plaintiff in a
 15 highly abusive and toxic manner, giving Plaintiff unreasonably write-up which was
 16 purely pretextual, yelling and screaming at Plaintiff, defaming Plaintiff, wrongfully
 terminating Plaintiff's employment, among other acts of retaliation.

17 37. As a direct and proximate result Defendants' conduct as set forth above,
 18 Plaintiff's emotional wellbeing has substantially suffered and will continue to suffer;
 19 Plaintiff has experienced and continues to experience severe emotional distress, in an
 20 amount to be proven at trial. Plaintiff alleges that she has and will continue to suffer
 21 substantial losses in earnings, other employment opportunities, employment benefits
 22 and other damages, the precise amounts to be proven at trial.

23 38. Defendants' despicable conduct as described herein was malicious and
 24 oppressive and done with a conscious disregard of Plaintiff's rights. Defendants' acts
 25 were designed to humiliate and oppress Plaintiff; and they had that effect. Defendants
 26 condoned, ratified and encouraged the unlawful conduct. Thus, Plaintiff is entitled to
 27 punitive damages against all Defendants under California Civil Code section 3294.

SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION**Retaliation of in Violation of
California Labor Code section 1102.5****(Against All Defendants)**

39. Plaintiff hereby repeats and realleges each and every allegation contained in each paragraph of this complaint and incorporates same by reference with the same force and effect as though set forth in full at this point.

40. As alleged herein and set forth in more detail above, during Plaintiff's employment, she discovered that Defendants had a scheme and practice of failing to comply with the United States House Ethics Manual passed by the United States House of Representatives where Defendant Sanchez serves as a member of the Democratic Party in using public funds for campaigning and fund raising, using public servants for campaigning and fund raising, using the Congressional office for campaign and fund raising purposes, deleting campaign and fund-raising related files from the computers prior an audit. Defendant Sanchez is the highest ranking member of the Democratic Party on the U.S. House Ethics Committee which policies the enforcement of the House Ethics Manual thereby Defendant Sanchez was in the best position to know that such conduct was in violation of the policies drafted by members of the United States House of Representatives. As a direct result of these complaints, Defendants engaged in retaliation in violation of public policy against Plaintiff in terms and conditions of employment, including, as mere examples, refusing to allow her to perform her job, removing authority and responsibility from Plaintiff, undermining and belittling Plaintiff, treating Plaintiff in a highly abusive and toxic manner, giving Plaintiff a knowingly false write-up which was purely pretextual, yelling and screaming at Plaintiff, defaming Plaintiff, wrongfully terminating Plaintiff's employment, among other acts of retaliation.

41. As a direct and proximate result Defendants' conduct as set forth above, Plaintiff's emotional wellbeing has substantially suffered and will continue to suffer;

1 Plaintiff has experienced and continues to experience severe emotional distress, in an
 2 amount to be proven at trial. Plaintiff alleges that she has and will continue to suffer
 3 substantial losses in earnings, other employment opportunities, employment benefits
 4 and other damages, the precise amounts to be proven at trial.

5 42. Defendants' despicable conduct as described herein was malicious and
 6 oppressive and done with a conscious disregard of Plaintiff's rights. Defendants' acts
 7 were designed to humiliate and oppress Plaintiff, and they had that effect. Defendants
 8 condoned, ratified and encouraged the unlawful conduct. Thus, Plaintiff is entitled to
 9 punitive damages against all Defendants under California Civil Code section 3294.

10 **THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION**

11 **Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress**

12 (Against All Defendants)

13 43. Plaintiff hereby repeats and realleges each and every allegation contained
 14 in each paragraph of this complaint and incorporates same by reference with the same
 15 force and effect as though set forth in full at this point.

16 44. As described herein, Defendants' conduct toward Plaintiff was outrageous
 17 in that said retaliatory conduct was beyond all bounds of decency and beyond what
 18 would the public expect of their representatives. Defendants subjected Plaintiff to this
 19 illegal conduct as set forth above in conjunction with her employment with Defendants.
 20 All said actions are outrageous.

21 45. Defendants' despicable and outrageous conduct as described herein was
 22 malicious and oppressive and done with a conscious disregard of Plaintiff's rights. All
 23 said conduct was intentional and done to oppress and humiliate Plaintiff. Defendants
 24 knew that said conduct would cause Plaintiff to suffer severe emotional distress. Said
 25 conduct, in fact, caused Plaintiff to suffer severe emotional distress.

26 46. Plaintiff did not consent to any of the outrageous conduct. None of the
 27 conduct was privileged. Defendants committed said acts by asserting their powers over
 28 Plaintiff with regards to his employment, compensation or other benefits.

1 47. As a direct and proximate result Defendants' conduct as set forth above,
 2 Plaintiff's emotional wellbeing has substantially suffered and will continue to suffer;
 3 Plaintiff has experienced and continues to experience severe emotional distress, in an
 4 amount to be proven at trial. Plaintiff alleges that she has and will continue to suffer
 5 substantial losses in earnings, other employment opportunities, employment benefits, as
 6 well as harm to her reputation and other damages, the precise amounts to be proven at
 7 trial.

8 48. Defendants' despicable conduct as described herein was malicious and
 9 oppressive and done with a conscious disregard of Plaintiff's rights. Defendants' acts
 10 were designed to humiliate and oppress Plaintiff; and they had that effect. Defendants
 11 condoned, ratified and encouraged the unlawful conduct. Thus, Plaintiff is entitled to
 12 punitive damages against all Defendants under California Civil Code section 3294.

13 **FOURTH CAUSE OF ACTION**

14 **Tortious Interference with Prospective Business Relations**

15 (Against All Defendants)

16 49. Plaintiff hereby repeats and realleges each and every allegation contained
 17 in each paragraph of this complaint and incorporates same by reference with the same
 18 force and effect as though set forth in full at this point.

19 50. Medrano has a reasonable expectation of advantageous economic
 20 relationships with current and prospective contacts in local politics which would
 21 advance her career in politics.

22 51. Medrano's relationship with offices in local politics in greater Los
 23 Angeles area contained the probability of future economic benefit in the form of future
 24 employment. Had Defendants refrained from engaging in the unlawful and wrongful
 25 conduct described herein, there is a substantial probability that said office(s) would
 26 have retained Medrano for employment.

27 52. On information and belief, Defendants knew or should have known about
 28 the potential economic relationship(s), described above, and knew or should have

1 known that these relationships would be interfered with and disrupted if Defendants
 2 failed to act with reasonable care in their contact with such offices when discussing
 3 Medrano and her capabilities. Defendants failed to act with reasonable care. Instead,
 4 Congressman Sanchez gave information about Medrano to said offices that led to
 5 Medrano not being hired, even where they initially recruited her for employment.

6 53. As a result of Defendants' acts, the above-described relationship has been
 7 actually disrupted, causing current and prospective employers to retain for employment
 8 individuals other than Medrano who has impeccable background in local politics.

9 54. As a direct and proximate result Defendants' conduct as set forth above,
 10 Plaintiff's emotional wellbeing has substantially suffered and will continue to suffer;
 11 Plaintiff has experienced and continues to experience severe emotional distress, in an
 12 amount to be proven at trial. Plaintiff alleges that she has and will continue to suffer
 13 substantial losses in earnings, other employment opportunities, employment benefits, as
 14 well as harm to her reputation and other damages, the precise amounts to be proven at
 15 trial.

16 55. Unless Defendants are restrained by appropriate injunctive relief, their
 17 actions are likely to recur and will cause Medrano irreparable injury for which there is
 18 no adequate remedy at law.

19 56. Defendants' interference with Medrano's prospective economic advantage
 20 with current or future potential employers. Defendants' despicable conduct as described
 21 herein was malicious and oppressive and done with a conscious disregard of Plaintiff's
 22 rights. Defendants' acts were designed to humiliate and oppress Plaintiff; and they had
 23 that effect. Defendants condoned, ratified and encouraged the unlawful conduct. Thus,
 24 Plaintiff is entitled to punitive damages against all Defendants under California Civil
 25 Code section 3294.

26 **FIFTH CAUSE OF ACTION**

27 **Conversion**

28 **(Against All Defendants)**

57. Plaintiff hereby repeats and realleges each and every allegation contained in each paragraph of this complaint and incorporates same by reference with the same force and effect as though set forth in full at this point.

58. Medrano had legal ownership and right to possession of all of the personal property she left behind in her office.

59. Defendants wrongfully damaged the objects she left behind in the office for their own benefit and to Plaintiff's detriment, in violation of Plaintiff's property rights therein.

60. As a direct and proximate result Defendants' conduct as set forth above, Plaintiff's emotional wellbeing has substantially suffered and will continue to suffer; Plaintiff has experienced and continues to experience severe emotional distress, in an amount to be proven at trial. Plaintiff alleges that she has and will continue to suffer substantial losses in earnings, other employment opportunities, employment benefits and other damages, the precise amounts to be proven at trial.

61. Defendants' despicable conduct as described herein was malicious and oppressive and done with a conscious disregard of Plaintiff's rights. Defendants' acts were designed to humiliate and oppress Plaintiff; and they had that effect. Defendants condoned, ratified and encouraged the unlawful conduct. Thus, Plaintiff is entitled to punitive damages against all Defendants under California Civil Code section 3294.

SIXTH CAUSE OF ACTION

Trespass to Chattel

(Against All Defendants)

62. Plaintiff hereby repeats and realleges each and every allegation contained in each paragraph of this complaint and incorporates same by reference with the same force and effect as though set forth in full at this point.

63. Medrano had legal ownership and right to possession of all of the personal property she left behind in her office.

64. On information and belief, Defendants intended to wrongfully damage

1 the objects she left behind in the office for their own benefit and to Plaintiff's
2 detriment, in violation of Plaintiff's property rights. They did just that. Medrano did
3 not consent to such conduct.

4 65. As a direct and proximate result Defendants' conduct as set forth above,
5 Plaintiff's emotional wellbeing has substantially suffered and will continue to suffer;
6 Plaintiff has experienced and continues to experience severe emotional distress, in an
7 amount to be proven at trial. Plaintiff alleges that she has and will continue to suffer
8 substantial losses in earnings, other employment opportunities, employment benefits
9 and other damages, the precise amounts to be proven at trial.

10 66. Defendants' despicable conduct as described herein was malicious and
11 oppressive and done with a conscious disregard of Plaintiff's rights. Defendants' acts
12 were designed to humiliate and oppress Plaintiff; and they had that effect. Defendants
13 condoned, ratified and encouraged the unlawful conduct. Thus, Plaintiff is entitled to
14 punitive damages against all Defendants under California Civil Code section 3294.

15 **SEVENTH CAUSE OF ACTION**

16 **Violation of First Amendment**

17 (Against All Defendants)

18 67. Plaintiff hereby repeats and realleges each and every allegation contained
19 in each paragraph of this complaint and incorporates same by reference with the same
20 force and effect as though set forth in full at this point.

21 68. A violation of the First Amendment's right to free speech constitutes
22 irreparable harm. *E.g., Elrod v. Burns*, 427 U.S. 347 (1976).

23 69. Defendants' actions had and continue to have an unlawful chilling effect
24 on Plaintiff's and others' right to free speech secured by the First Amendment to the
25 United States Constitution.

26 70. Defendants unlawfully retaliated against Plaintiff for exercising her right
27 to free speech secured by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

71. As a direct and proximate result Defendants' conduct as set forth above, Plaintiff's emotional wellbeing has substantially suffered and will continue to suffer; Plaintiff has experienced and continues to experience severe emotional distress, in an amount to be proven at trial. Plaintiff alleges that she has and will continue to suffer substantial losses in earnings, other employment opportunities, employment benefits and other damages, the precise amounts to be proven at trial.

72. Defendants' despicable conduct as described herein was malicious and oppressive and done with a conscious disregard of Plaintiff's rights. Defendants' acts were designed to humiliate and oppress Plaintiff; and they had that effect. Defendants condoned, ratified and encouraged the unlawful conduct. Thus, Plaintiff is entitled to punitive damages against all Defendants under California Civil Code section 3294.

EIGHTH CAUSE OF ACTION

Violation of Fourteenth Amendment

Violation of Procedural Due Process

(Against All Defendants)

73. Plaintiff hereby repeats and realleges each and every allegation contained in each paragraph of this complaint and incorporates same by reference with the same force and effect as though set forth in full at this point.

74. The Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution prohibits the Congressional Office of Linda Sanchez from depriving any person of life, liberty, or process without due process of law.

75. Plaintiff has a liberty and/or property interest in her employment, receiving income from said employment.

76. When Defendants terminated Plaintiff of her employment without due process of law in violation of the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.

77. As a direct and proximate result Defendants' conduct as set forth above, Plaintiff's emotional wellbeing has substantially suffered and will continue to suffer;

1 Plaintiff has experienced and continues to experience severe emotional distress, in an
 2 amount to be proven at trial. Plaintiff alleges that she has and will continue to suffer
 3 substantial losses in earnings, other employment opportunities, employment benefits
 4 and other damages, the precise amounts to be proven at trial.

5 78. Defendants' despicable conduct as described herein was malicious and
 6 oppressive and done with a conscious disregard of Plaintiff's rights. Defendants' acts
 7 were designed to humiliate and oppress Plaintiff, and they had that effect. Defendants
 8 condoned, ratified and encouraged the unlawful conduct. Thus, Plaintiff is entitled to
 9 punitive damages against all Defendants under California Civil Code section 3294.

10 NINTH CAUSE OF ACTION

11 **Defamation**

12 (Against Defendants Sanchez and Shahinian)

13 79. Plaintiff hereby repeats and realleges each and every allegation contained
 14 in each paragraph of this complaint and incorporates same by reference with the same
 15 force and effect as though set forth in full at this point.

16 80. Prior to Plaintiff's termination, Defendant Shahinian published multiple
 17 false and defamatory statements about Plaintiff Medrano, including, but not limited
 18 to, yelling at her in front of everyone in the office that Medrano was
 19 "unprofessional" and "inappropriate."

20 81. After Plaintiff's termination, Defendant Sanchez has published and
 21 continues to publish numerous false and defamatory statements about Plaintiff
 22 Medrano, including, but not limited to, telling others that Medrano was not qualified.

23 82. The false and defamatory statements made by Defendants Sanchez and
 24 Shahinian concerning Medrano's personal, professional, and business reputation and
 25 character were made maliciously and with intent to destroy Plaintiff's professional
 26 reputation and career.

27 83. The statements made by Defendants Sanchez and Shahinian clearly
 28 denigrated Plaintiff's reputation, and accused her of engaging in conduct and having

1 traits incompatible with her abilities as a field representative, and are thus defamatory.

2 84. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant Sanchez's defamatory
3 statements, Plaintiff has been impaired in her ability to earn as a public servant, and
4 has sustained and will continue to sustain loss of income in amounts to be proved at
5 trial.

6 85. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant Sanchez's conduct,
7 Plaintiff has suffered and will continue to suffer extreme mental anguish and distress.

8 86. As a direct and proximate result Defendants' conduct as set forth above,
9 Plaintiff's emotional wellbeing has substantially suffered and will continue to suffer;
10 Plaintiff has experienced and continues to experience severe emotional distress, in an
11 amount to be proven at trial. Plaintiff alleges that she has and will continue to suffer
12 substantial losses in earnings, other employment opportunities, employment benefits, as
13 well as harm to her reputation and other damages, the precise amounts to be proven at
14 trial.

15 87. Defendants' despicable conduct as described herein was malicious and
16 oppressive and done with a conscious disregard of Plaintiff's rights. Defendants' acts
17 were designed to humiliate and oppress Plaintiff; and they had that effect. Defendants
18 condoned, ratified and encouraged the unlawful conduct. Thus, Plaintiff is entitled to
19 punitive damages against all Defendants under California Civil Code section 3294.

20 **TENTH CAUSE OF ACTION**

21 **Violation of FMLA**

22 29 U.S.C. §§ 2615, 2617(a)

23 (Against All Defendants)

24 88. Plaintiff hereby repeats and realleges each and every allegation contained
25 in each paragraph of this complaint and incorporates same by reference with the same
26 force and effect as though set forth in full at this point.

27 89. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and alleges that Congressional Office of
28 Linda Sanchez qualifies as an "employer" as the term is defined in the FMLA, 29

1 U.S.C. § 2611(4), and that Plaintiff is an "eligible employee" as that term is defined
2 in the FMLA, 29 U.S.C. § 2611(2).

3 90. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and alleges thereon, that there was an
4 "entitlement to leave" as defined in the FMLA, 29 U.S.C. § 2612(1), and that Plaintiff
5 was denied her entitlement to leave as prescribed in FMLA.

6 91. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and alleges thereon, that Plaintiff was
7 entitled to continued employment without discrimination as described in the FMLA, 29
8 U.S.C. § 2615, and that Defendants violated section 2615 by retaliating and
9 discriminating against her because she took her leave.

10 92. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and alleges thereon, that Defendants are
11 responsible under the FMLA, 29 U.S.C. § 2617(a).

12 93. As the result of Plaintiff's termination, Plaintiff has incurred, and is now
13 incurring, a loss of wages, all within the meaning of the FMLA, 29 U.S.C. § 2617(a), in
14 an amount to be proved at trial, but believed to exceed \$25,000.00. These costs include,
15 without limitation, lost wages, back pay from the effective date of termination, and lost
16 employment benefits from the date of termination, the loss of front pay as of the date of
17 this complaint, and any interest on the amount thereon as provided in the FMLA, 29
18 U.S.C. § 2617. The costs also include attorneys' fees that, as of the date of this
19 complaint, exceed, \$10,000.00.

20 94. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and on that basis alleges, that pursuant
21 to 29 U.S.C. § 2617(a), Defendants are liable to Plaintiff for the costs described in the
22 preceding paragraph.

23 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

24 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays that judgment be entered in her favor and
25 against Defendants, and each of them, jointly and severally as follows:

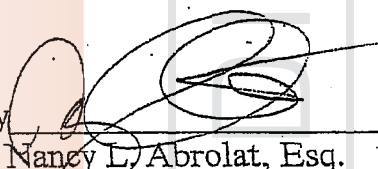
- 26 1. That Defendants be ordered to pay Plaintiff compensatory and general
27 damages according to proof at trial;

2. That Defendants be ordered to pay Plaintiff's prejudgment interest;
3. That Defendants be ordered to pay Plaintiff's costs of suit;
4. That this Court award injunctive relieve reinstating Plaintiff to the position she held prior to her termination without the violations;
5. That this Court award injunctive relieve prohibiting Defendants from further defamation and blackballing against Plaintiff;
6. That Defendants be ordered to pay Plaintiff's reasonable attorneys' fees and costs;
7. That Defendants be ordered to pay punitive damages;
8. That this Court awards such other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper.

DATED: January 27, 2016

ABROLAT LAW pc

By


Nancy L. Abrolat, Esq.
Shahane A. Martirosyan, Esq.
Attorneys for Plaintiff
Kara A. Medrano

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

Plaintiff hereby demands trial by jury on all issues so triable in the Complaint.

Respectfully submitted:

DATED: January 27, 2016

ABROLAT LAW pc

By: 

Nancy L. Abrolat
Shahane A. Martirosyan
Attorneys for Plaintiff
Kara A. Medrano