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**NEW STATE LAW PROHIBITS MAKING OR ACCEPTING
POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS INSIDE COUNTY COURTHOUSE**

New law will take effect on September 1, 2009

El Paso County Attorney José R. Rodríguez has informed County elected officials and County employees about a new state law that makes it a Class A misdemeanor criminal offense to make or accept political contributions while in the courthouse. The prohibition includes political contributions to candidates or officeholders, political committees, or persons acting on behalf of candidates, officeholders or political committees.

In Texas punishment for a Class A misdemeanors ranges from payment of fines of up to \$4,000, to confinement of up to 1 year in jail, or both payment of a fine and confinement.

The prohibition, which will take effect on September 1, 2009, also applies to all county annexes, offices of the Justice of the Peace, the Juvenile Probation Department, the MDR Building, and all Municipal Courtrooms.

The new law explicitly excludes from the prohibition political contributions received via the United States Postal Service or common or contract carrier.

County Attorney José R. Rodríguez said today that, although all County officials and employees have been informed about this new legislation, it is also very important for residents of El Paso in general to take notice of this prohibition.

“In the past, it has been a common practice for individuals interested in the political process to bring campaign contributions to Judges or County Officials in person or drop them at their offices in the Courthouse. Such activity is now illegal and can bring legal consequences to those who are not in compliance”, Rodríguez said.

Rodríguez explained that awareness about the new prohibition is especially urgent because a great number of District Judges and County Officials will be running for re-election next year, and during the next couple of months many residents are expected to make political contributions in those races.

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