

Democrat & Chronicle

NEWS

Complaint alleges DA Sandra Doorley violated ethics guidelines through involvement in Zeldin campaign



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Published 12:10 p.m. ET Aug. 3, 2022 | Updated 3:49 p.m. ET Aug. 3, 2022

A Perinton man has filed an ethics complaint against District Attorney Sandra Doorley, alleging that she violated ethics rules with her willingness to serve as campaign co-chair for Republican gubernatorial candidate Lee Zeldin.

The complaint, from Michael Brazee, notes that there are ethics opinions and District Attorneys association guidelines restricting the political activities of a district attorney, including an opinion saying it would be improper to “campaign for or endorse candidates for public office except for endorsing a successor candidate.”

The complaint was filed with a state appellate court, and typically is then routed to a grievance committee, which investigates allegations of misconduct by lawyers.

Doorley has acknowledged that she agreed to co-chair the campaign of Zeldin, whom she describes as a friend, but then reversed course upon advice from the state DA's association.

"In the Spring of 2022, Congressman Zeldin asked District Attorney Doorley if she would be willing to serve on his campaign. Since they had a pre-existing friendship, she agreed," said a statement from Doorley's Office. "However, after discussing with the District Attorneys Association of the State of New York representatives, District Attorney Doorley stepped away from the role and informed Congressman Zeldin of this decision on April 28, 2022."

Zeldin still had Doorley's name on his website as a co-chair until late last month, before removing it. His campaign has said the name was left there in error.

The complaint alleges that Doorley also violated ethics with an appearance at events with Zeldin.

Doorley, a Republican, would be up for reelection next year if she decides to seek her fourth term.

"I'm troubled by the repeated ethical lapses by our District Attorney," Brazee, a Democrat, said in a statement. "After speaking with friends in the community, I found that my read on the situation was shared and that some action had to be taken. DAs are supposed to be fair-minded and balanced, but it's impossible to do that when they're using their position for political purposes."

Doorley attended a Perinton event on July 21, where David Jakubonis, an Iraqi War veteran, walked onstage wielding a hand-held self-defense device with sharp points. He is accused of assaulting Zeldin, who was not injured. Jakubonis was quickly subdued.

Jakubonis was released after the incident because his alleged crime – second-degree attempted assault – was not eligible for cash bail. Zeldin supports quickly seized on the release as proof of the failure of the state's bail reform laws.

Sheriff's Office investigators say they determined the charge, one in which there isn't an injury. They also consulted with First Assistant District Attorney Perry Duckles, they said.

Doorley plans to have a special prosecutor with the case. In his complaint, Brazee alleges that she should have more immediately had her office step aside.