

Manzano-Plaza takes paid role in Gimenez reelection effort

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Jesse Manzano-Plaza, who ran Mayor **Carlos Gimenez's** 2012 reelection campaign, has signed on as spokesman and senior consultant for the candidate's political committee.

Miami-Dade Residents First, the political committee indirectly dedicated to Gimenez's 2016 reelection effort, will pay the longtime political consultant \$7,000 a month, Manzano-Plaza said. Miami-Dade Residents First already has a professional fund-raiser under contract, **Brian Goldmeier**, whose Miami firm is earning about \$12,000 a month, according to prior financial reports.

"Working with Miami-Dade Residents First to support Mayor Gimenez is a great privilege for me," Manzano-Plaza said in a statement. "I am looking forward to helping share the Mayor's vision with the residents of our community..."

Manzano-Plaza, 37, is a registered lobbyist for Genting, the Malaysian casino giant that wants to build a large resort in downtown Miami. The company also runs a ferry out of the county's PortMiami.

He also works for a firm, LSN Communications, with corporate ties to the partners behind Llorente Heckler, a top lobbying firm in Miami. Llorente Heckler partners represent some large players when it comes to development and contracts in the county, including American Airlines, Duty Free Americas and Turnberry. LSN Communications and Llorente Heckler share office space in Miami Beach.

(In 2011, when Gimenez was running for the mayoral seat left open by the recall of then-mayor Carlos Alvarez, Manzano-Plaza managed the unsuccessful campaign for **Marcelo Llorente**, now managing partner at Llorente Heckler.)

Manzano-Plaza noted LSN Communications is a separate corporate entity, and that his representation of Genting is also through a different corporation. He added that his contract with Miami-Dade Residents First is separate from his work for LSN.

Also, Manzano-Plaza said that should his role shift to an actual campaign post – rather than on contract with a political committee – he would take another look at his business ties in terms of Miami-Dade connections.

Legally, Miami-Dade Residents First can't explicitly campaign for Gimenez as he seeks a second full term as mayor of Florida's largest county. But it can use its funds to tout the mayor's record, and Gimenez has personally called donors for committee contributions. As of March 31, the committee has earned \$880,000 after three months of fund-raising. The committee's April report is due next week, and it's expected to bring the total over the \$1 million mark.

In an interview, Manzano-Plaza laid out some of the themes Miami-Dade Residents First plans to highlight in the lead-up to the August 2016 primary for Miami-Dade mayor.

"The purpose of this committee is to share some facts and information about the accomplishments and results of good leadership in Miami-Dade County over the last four years by leaders like Mayor Gimenez," Manzano-Plaza said. That he has "improved services without raising taxes. That Mayor Gimenez has lowered taxes in Miami-Dade County. The fact that he led by example by cutting his salary in half."

Gimenez has yet to officially file reelection papers, but he has said publicly he is running for reelection. So far, he faces one official candidate: school board member **Raquel Regalado**. County Commissioner Xavier Suarez, who holds Gimenez's former commission seat, said he is considering a run for mayor in 2016 as well.

Note: This post was updated to fix an error regarding who Llorente Heckler represents.