

Henry Cuellar has used his campaign funds to give himself and his family over one hundred thousand dollars. He's even given loans to himself, and may have provided earmarks for his brother. Cuellar's alleged abuse of power has been widely documented by the government watchdog group Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington.

In 2012, government watchdog group Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW) documented Cuellar's ethics abuses including reimbursements to his family, loans to himself, and earmarks for his brother:

- In 2012, government watchdog group Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW) issued a report on “how members of the House of Representatives use their positions to benefit themselves and their families.” “This report marks the first-ever complete study of how members of the House of Representatives use their positions to benefit themselves and their families. Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW) undertook a similar study in 2007, but it was not all-inclusive. Expanding on our earlier work, for this 2012 edition we reviewed every sitting member of the House. CREW’s investigation uncovered 248 members meriting inclusion in this in-depth compilation, which covers the 2008 and 2010 election cycles.” (“Family Affair,” [Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington](#), 2012)
- In the 2008 and 2010 election cycles, Cuellar reimbursed himself and his wife over \$14,000 in campaign funds.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• During the 2010 election cycle, Rep. Cuellar’s campaign committee reimbursed Rep. Cuellar \$13,271 for office rent and furnishings, campaign events, and travel expenses.⁸ <p>Imelda Cuellar (wife):⁹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• During the 2008 election cycle, Rep. Cuellar’s campaign committee reimbursed Ms. Cuellar \$886 for travel expenses and airfare.¹⁰
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(“Family Affair,” [Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington](#), 2012)

- Cuellar paid himself 6% interest, for a total of over \$24,000, on a loan he made to his own campaign.

<p>Henry Cuellar (self):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• From 2002 to 2004, Rep. Cuellar loaned his campaign \$100,426.⁴ He is charging a 6 percent interest rate.⁵ His campaign committee reported paying him \$24,366 in loan interest during the 2008 election cycle.⁶ As of the end of the 2008 election cycle, the campaign committee had paid \$98,628 towards the loan principal.⁷

(“Family Affair,” [Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington](#), 2012)

- In FY 2010, Cuellar earmarked \$250,000 for a project that benefitted his brother, the sheriff of Webb County.

Martin Cuellar (brother):¹¹

- Mr. Cuellar is the sheriff of Webb County, Texas.¹² In fiscal year 2010, Rep. Cuellar earmarked \$250,000 for the South Texas Forensics Laboratory at the Webb County Sheriff's Office.¹³

(“Family Affair,” [Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington](#), 2012)

Cuellar loaned his campaign \$46,000 in 2004:

- Cuellar loaned his campaign \$46,000 in 2004.

Source name	Recipient	Election	State	Receipt date	Amount
CUELLAR - PERS FUNDS, HENRY	TEXANS FOR HENRY CUELLAR CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN	GENERAL	TX	09/01/2004	\$4,500.00
CUELLAR, HENRY R	TEXANS FOR HENRY CUELLAR CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN	GENERAL	TX	06/03/2004	\$1,500.00
CUELLAR, HENRY R	TEXANS FOR HENRY CUELLAR CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN	GENERAL	TX	05/27/2004	\$40,000.00

(FEC, “[Texans for Henry Cuellar Congressional Campaign](#),” Accessed 7/17/22)

Cuellar has paid members of his family nearly \$4,000:

- Cuellar has paid members of his family nearly \$4,000:

Family Members	Sum Of Disbursement	Reason
Cuellar, Carlos	\$201.25	Mileage Reimbursement
Odilia Cuellar	\$377.54	Miscellaneous
Catherine A. Cuellar	\$1,661.97	Field Work/Field Labor/Office Work/Office Work and Expenses
Christina A. Cuellar	\$1,679.79	Field Labor/Office Work
TOTAL	\$3,920.60	

(Disbursements, “Catherine Cuellar,” “Christina Cuellar,” “Odilia Cuellar,” “Carlos Cuellar,” Texans for Henry Cuellar Congressional Campaign, [FEC](#), Accessed 7/26/2022)

- **Odilia and Carlos Cuellar are relatives of Henry Cuellar.** “Martin Siller Cuellar Sr., father of three local elected officials and five other children, died Saturday at the age of 92. The Tamaulipas native and his wife, Odilia, who died in 2015, settled in Laredo after they decided the migrant life was too tough on the family. Cuellar found work here as a gardener and ranch manager. He later became a U.S. citizen. Cuellar loved his family and his country, said his son Henry Cuellar, U.S. congressman...Martin is survived by his children, including Henry (Imelda) Cuellar, Carlos (Laura) Cuellar, Martin Cuellar, Tony Cuellar, Jorge (Monica) Cuellar, Odilia Cuellar, Rosie Cuellar, and Manuel "Meme" (Diana) Cuellar; 18 grandchildren; many great-grandchildren; siblings, Beatriz Perez and Enrique Cuellar; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends.” (Ashley Sanchez, “Patriarch of Cuellar family dies at 92,” [LMTonline](#), 4/15/2019)

- Christina and Catherine Cuellar are the daughters of Henry Cuellar. “Congressman Cuellar and his wife, Imelda, reside in Laredo, Texas with their two daughters, Christina and Catherine.” (Biography, [Henry Cuellar for Congress](#), Accessed 7/25/2022)

Cuellar has used his leadership PAC accounts to donate thousands to his brother, Sheriff Martin Cuellar’s campaign:

- From 2008 to 2020, Cuellar’s PAC gave a total of \$8,400 to his brother’s campaign for sheriff.

Spender	Recipient	State	Description	Disbursement date ▼	Amount –
TEXAS FIRST PAC	MARTIN CUELLAR FOR SHERIFF	TX	IN-KIND: CONSULTING	02/14/2020	\$3,400.00
TEXAS FIRST PAC	MARTIN CUELLAR FOR SHERIFF	TX	TX-WEBB COUNTY SHERIFF	06/20/2008	\$5,000.00

(“Disbursements,” [Federal Election Commission](#), Accessed 1/24/22)

Editor’s Note: [Texas First PAC](#) is Cuellar’s Leadership PAC.

- From 2011 to 2016, Cuellar’s campaign gave a total of \$3,250 to his brother’s campaign for sheriff.

Spender	Recipient	State	Description	Disbursement date ▼	Amount –
TEXANS FOR HENRY CUELLAR CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN	RE-ELECT MARTIN CUELLAR SHERIFF	TX	NON-FEDERAL CONTRIBUTION	11/01/2016	\$1,500.00
TEXANS FOR HENRY CUELLAR CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN	MARTIN CUELLAR FOR SHERIFF	TX	NON-FEDERAL CONTRIBUTION	06/29/2015	\$500.00
TEXANS FOR HENRY CUELLAR CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN	MARTIN CUELLAR CAMPAIGN	TX	NON-FEDERAL CONTRIBUTION	11/03/2014	\$500.00
TEXANS FOR HENRY CUELLAR CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN	MARTIN CUELLAR CAMPAIGN	TX	NON-FEDERAL CONTRIBUTION	05/10/2013	\$250.00
TEXANS FOR HENRY CUELLAR CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN	SHERIFF MARTIN CUELLAR	TX	NON-FEDERAL CONTRIBUTION	05/09/2011	\$500.00

(“Disbursements,” [Federal Election Commission](#), Accessed 1/24/22)

Cuellar may have used his position on the House Agriculture Committee to help his brother Martin secure more funding for county penitentiary facilities in South Texas:

- The growth of private prisons proved worrying to some Texas sheriffs in 2009 who were looking for a source of income for their respective counties. “Some Texas sheriffs are looking to an unlikely source to get them out of the hole as private prisons win away federal contracts for inmates and put the financial squeeze on county jails. Federal

prisoners translate to dollars to local detention facilities – mainly county jails – which are reimbursed at a rate that can exceed \$50 a day for each federal inmate they house. But competition from private prisons in Texas continues to shrink that potential pool of inmates for smaller, poorer counties, leading some local governments to ask help from an agency better known for its fever tick riders than building jails.” (Julian Aguilar, “USDA Approved: Jail Construction,” [The Texas Tribune](#), 12/14/2009)

- **Martin Cuellar, at the time, talked about a Dept. of Agriculture proposal to give his county \$5 million to build a new county-owned jail.** “The Department of Agriculture is currently considering whether and how it will grant or loan Webb County about \$5 million, said Sheriff Martin Cuellar, which will be used to build a new county-owned jail. ‘We build another jail elsewhere and house the regular state prisoners [there],’ said Cuellar. ‘We could also have the current jail filled with federal prisoners and that could be something very profitable to the county.’” (Julian Aguilar, “USDA Approved: Jail Construction,” [The Texas Tribune](#), 12/14/2009)
- **Webb County, where Martin is sheriff, sees federal-prisoner contracts as a steady stream of cash and were threatened by a private facility opening in the region.** “County governments and the U.S. Marshals Service negotiate federal-prisoner contracts, some of which used to be a steady secondary source of revenue for Webb. But Cuellar’s future plans could be thwarted by the region’s brand new detention facility, the privately owned Rio Grande Detention Center, which undoubtedly wants to see all of its roughly 275,000 square feet put to use. The new prison is nestled just outside the City of Laredo’s boundaries and can house 1,500 inmates, including up to 68 female detainees. Opened in October 2008, the detention facility was for years a source of bitter dispute because of opposition to the detention center’s owner and operator, the Florida-based GEO Group, and its record of alleged human-rights abuses within the confines of its facilities in Texas.” (Julian Aguilar, “USDA Approved: Jail Construction,” [The Texas Tribune](#), 12/14/2009)
- **Martin Cuellar remarked that the county was losing half a million dollars because of prisoners going to the private facility.** “Local officials nonetheless hailed the facility as a job creator, and a source of revenue through utility contracts with Webb County. But Cuellar says the county is losing \$500,000 annually because inmates are going to GEO instead of the county lockup.” (Julian Aguilar, “USDA Approved: Jail Construction,” [The Texas Tribune](#), 12/14/2009)
- **Martin credited Henry for shifting the USDA’s priorities in his preferred direction.** “Cuellar said it’s helpful knowing people at the federal level, in this case, his older brother, U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar, D-Laredo, who the sheriff said has helped guide the department in the right direction. ‘Through what they call the Rural Communities Facilities Program there is a way that you can use funding to build community centers, you can build city halls or you can even build jails,’ said Rep. Cuellar, a member of the House Agriculture Committee.” (Julian Aguilar, “USDA Approved: Jail Construction,” [The Texas Tribune](#), 12/14/2009)
- **As of December 2009, Webb County’s application with the Dept. of Agriculture for funds is pending.** “Webb County’s application is pending with USDA. Other issues, including whether any awards require a county match and how Webb can maximize county

buildings that already exist, are being considered, said Sheriff Cuellar.” (Julian Aguilar, “USDA Approved: Jail Construction,” [The Texas Tribune](#), 12/14/2009)

Henry Cuellar’s campaign committee has donated over \$1,000 in campaign funds to his sister, Rosie Cuellar’s political campaign:

- From 2013 to 2019, Cuellar’s campaign gave a total of \$1,250 to Rosie Cuellar’s political campaign.

Spender	Recipient	State	Description	Disbursement date ▼	Amount –
TEXANS FOR HENRY CUELLAR CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN	ROSIE CUELLAR CAMPAIGN	TX	NON-FEDERAL CONTRIBUTION	05/20/2019	\$1,000.00
TEXANS FOR HENRY CUELLAR CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN	ROSIE CUELLAR CAMPAIGN	TX	NON-FEDERAL CONTRIBUTION	04/30/2013	\$250.00

(“Disbursements,” [Federal Election Commission](#), Accessed 1/24/22)

- **Rosie Cuellar is the brother of Henry Cuellar.** “Martin Siller Cuellar Sr., father of three local elected officials and five other children, died Saturday at the age of 92...He later became a U.S. citizen. Cuellar loved his family and his country, said his son Henry Cuellar, U.S. congressman...Martin is survived by his children, including Henry (Imelda) Cuellar, Carlos (Laura) Cuellar, Martin Cuellar, Tony Cuellar, Jorge (Monica) Cuellar, Odilia Cuellar, Rosie Cuellar, and Manuel "Meme" (Diana) Cuellar; 18 grandchildren; many great-grandchildren; siblings, Beatriz Perez and Enrique Cuellar; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends.” (Ashley Sanchez, “Patriarch of Cuellar family dies at 92,” [LMTonline](#), 4/15/2019)

Rosie Cuellar has received thousands of dollars for phone banking for Cuellar’s campaign in 2022

- In 2022, Rosa Cuellar was compensated \$8,000 for phone banking for the Cuellar re-election campaign.

TEXANS FOR HENRY CUELLAR CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN	CUELLAR, ROSA MARIA	TX	PHONE BANKING	04/29/2022	\$2,000.00	▶
TEXANS FOR HENRY CUELLAR CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN	CUELLAR, ROSA MARIA	TX	PHONE BANKING	04/01/2022	\$2,000.00	▶
TEXANS FOR HENRY CUELLAR CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN	CUELLAR, ROSA MARIA	TX	PHONE BANKING	02/28/2022	\$2,000.00	▶
TEXANS FOR HENRY CUELLAR CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN	CUELLAR, ROSA MARIA	TX	PHONE BANKING	01/31/2022	\$2,000.00	▶

(Disbursements, Texans for Henry Cuellar Congressional Campaign, [FEC](#), Accessed 6/8/2022)

From 1997 to 2011, Cuellar owned an airplane rental company in Texas called “H. C. Air:”

- In 1997, Cuellar registered a company called H. C. Air, Inc, but the company no longer has a right to transact business in Texas.

H. C. AIR, INC.	
Texas Taxpayer Number	32001109340
Mailing Address	1519 WASHINGTON ST STE 200 LAREDO, TX 78040-4412
Right to Transact Business in Texas	FRANCHISE TAX ENDED
State of Formation	TX
Effective SOS Registration Date	12/05/1997
Texas SOS File Number	0146999500
Registered Agent Name	ENRIQUE R CUELLAR
Registered Office Street Address	1519 WASHINGTON STE. 200 LAREDO, TX 78040

("Taxable Entity Search," [Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts](#), Accessed 3/22/21)

- Cuellar was listed as the President and Director of H. C. Air.

Title	Name and Address
PRESIDENT	ENRIQUE R CUELLAR 8205 ESTATE DR LAREDO, TX 78045
DIRECTOR	ENRIQUE R CUELLAR 8205 ESTATE DR LAREDO, TX 78045

("Taxable Entity Search," [Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts](#), Accessed 3/22/21)

- In 2007, Cuellar reported earning up to \$5,000 in income from airplane rentals through H. C. Air.

JT	H.C. AIR, INC. (FMV) LAREDO, TX 78040 Airplane Rental	\$100,001 - \$250,000	S-corp Income -	\$2,501 - \$5,000
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(Henry Cuellar, "Financial Disclosure Report," [Clerk of the House of Representatives](#), Filed 5/15/08)

- In 2011, Cuellar sold the H. C. Air airplane for up to \$100,000.

Report any purchase, sale, or exchange by you, your spouse, or dependant child during the reporting year of any real property, stocks, bonds, commodities futures, or other securities when the amount of the transaction exceeded \$1,000. Include transactions that resulted in a loss. Provide a brief description of any exchange transaction. Do not report a transaction between you, your spouse, or your dependent child, or the purchase or sale of your personal residence, unless it is rented out. If only a portion of an asset is sold, please so indicate (i.e., "partial sale"). See example below.					
SP, DC, JT	Asset	Type of Transaction	Capital Gain in Excess of \$200?	Date	Amount of Transaction
JT	H.C. AIR, INC. AIRCRAFT	S	No	11/15/11	\$50,001 - \$100,000

(Henry Cuellar, "Financial Disclosure Report," [Clerk of the House of Representatives](#), Filed 5/15/12)

A Washington Free Beacon article in February 2022 highlighted how Cuellar funneled tens of thousands of campaign dollars to HC Air:

- **In February 2022, the Washington Free Beacon published an article in which it revealed that Cuellar funneled almost \$100,000 to HC Air from his campaign coffers.** “Texas Democratic congressman Henry Cuellar used campaign cash to funnel nearly \$100,000 to a company he used to register a private plane, public records reviewed by the *Washington Free Beacon* show. From 2004 to 2010, Cuellar's campaign paid more than \$91,000 to H.C. Air, a now-defunct company Cuellar registered in 1997 using his campaign office address. According to Federal Aviation Administration records, Cuellar owned a Piper PA-31-310 aircraft through the company. The twin-engined plane carries up to nine passengers and typically costs around \$100,000.” (Collin Anderson, “How Henry Cuellar Used Campaign Cash To Fund a Private Plane,” [The Washington Free Beacon](#), 2/25/2022)
- **The article pointed that HC Air seemed to produce little revenue and that no other campaign entity reported using the company’s services.** “In a 2007 financial disclosure, Cuellar identified H.C. Air as an “airplane rental” business valued at between \$100,000 and \$250,000. Outside of its partnership with Cuellar's own campaign, however, the company appears to have produced little revenue—Cuellar reported receiving just \$2,500 to \$5,000 in “S-corp income” from H.C. Air from 2007 to 2011. No other campaign used the company during that period, Federal Election Commission records show.” (Collin Anderson, “How Henry Cuellar Used Campaign Cash To Fund a Private Plane,” [The Washington Free Beacon](#), 2/25/2022)
- **There are questions around if Cuellar’s campaign’s financial relationship with HC Air was a violation of rules.** “Cuellar's decision to use his campaign to pay his own business raises ‘the possibility of abuse,’ Foundation for Accountability and Civic Trust executive director Kendra Arnold told the *Free Beacon*. Under federal campaign finance rules, Cuellar is not allowed to use donor funds to finance personal trips taken on the plane. Cuellar's campaign payments to the company must also fall within a “fair market value.” Given that Cuellar's campaign payments to H.C. Air nearly matched the value of the plane itself, he may have overpaid.” (Collin Anderson, “How Henry Cuellar Used Campaign Cash To Fund a Private Plane,” [The Washington Free Beacon](#), 2/25/2022)
- **Cuellar has been using campaign funds for HC Air since his time as Texas Secy. Of State.** “Cuellar, whose campaign did not return a request for comment, also spent donor funds on the plane during his brief stint as Texas secretary of state. From August to October 2001, Cuellar spent more than \$10,000 in campaign cash on aircraft repairs, state filings show.” (Collin Anderson, “How Henry Cuellar Used Campaign Cash To Fund a Private Plane,” [The Washington Free Beacon](#), 2/25/2022)