

Political watchdog Ray Gilbert dies

By John Hall

EL PASO TIMES

Ray Gilbert, a longtime government watchdog, died Friday.

He was known for regularly attending City Council and County Commissioners Court meetings and advocating for taxpayers.

"I've always respected that he loved his government so much that he participated in it," said Mayor John Cook. "Ray was the kind of person that took it to the next level, followed his government, studied it and participated and asked some very good questions and made you defend your positions. Ray is going to be missed. I've always considered him as a friend."

Gilbert, whose age was not known, was a harsh critic of local government, especially when he felt that taxpayer money was being misused. He twice sued the Thomason Hospital District over financial disclosure issues, and he served on the hospital's board for a period.

County Commissioner Dan Haggerty said that though he and Gilbert had a number of disagreements over the years, he appreciated Gilbert's commitment and how informed he was on the issues.

"He was brutal, but he kept us very humble," Haggerty said. "I loved him; I thought he was



Gilbert

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He appealed and lost again, but he won a victory for community watchdogs on Oct. 13 when Judge David Wellington Chew decided that Gilbert would not have to pay \$25,000 in attorney's fees for the city because he had brought the case to the appeals court.

A longtime friend of Gilbert's and a fellow watchdog, Richard Schecter, said that Gilbert could be hard on his opponents but always had his heart in the right place.

"A lot of people felt that he was maybe too outspoken or too hard-nosed or whatever, but he always had a good heart," Schecter said. "He always wanted the best for El Paso, and as far as I know, everything he did was from the moral high ground and trying to pull everybody along with him to that higher level."

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In 2008, Gilbert lost a lawsuit that he filed against the city of El Paso, El Paso

Water Utilities and the Public Service Board that claimed the City Council didn't have the authority to hand over control of the stormwater district to the PSB.

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