

When Trust is Broken: Lessons in Union Financial Oversight

**Case Study- UFLAC Misconduct Sparks Audit and Reform*

In March 2025, the Secretary of the United Firefighters of Los Angeles City (UFLAC), Adam Walker, was removed from office amid serious financial misconduct allegations.

The International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), UFLAC's parent organization, alleges that Walker personally deposited over \$75,000 of UFLAC Fire Foundation funds into his own account between December 2022, and January 2024.

Walker denies wrongdoing, claiming the deposits were reimbursements for out-of-pocket costs related to charity golf tournaments. He admitted publicly the transactions may "look bad", blaming them on "poor bookkeeping". To date, Walker has provided approximately \$17,000 in receipts, which include a \$5000 deposit for a cancelled third golf tournament, \$2400 in Visa Gift

Cards "for staff, members, and individuals" who support the Union and its membership, and 57 transactions at retailers like Amazon, Dick's Sporting Goods, and 7-Eleven.

The investigation is ongoing as IAFF is still attempting to reconcile the remaining \$58,000 and the specific nature of those expenses.

The investigation broadened after UFLAC's new Treasurer discovered additional discrepancies in the union's accounts after taking over the position.

As a result of the Walker investigation, the Treasurer, in an exercise of due diligence, inquired into his predecessor's purchase of one of the Union's take-home vehicles – a 2017 Chevy Malibu.

Domingo Albarran Jr., a retired LAFD Captain who served as the previous Treasurer, purchased the Malibu for \$4000 but reported the sale to DMV at only \$500 and inflated the milage by 30,000.

In a statement to the LA Times, Albarran admitted he underreported the sale price to the DMV to avoid paying the extra taxes and contended that the car needed approximately \$2000 including mechanical work and two new tires. The Treasurer discovered these repairs were completed before Albarran bought the car and were paid for with the UFLAC credit card.

The Treasurer's deeper review of Albarran's use of his union-issued credit card revealed gas purchases that exceeded the Malibu's fuel tank capacity, surveillance footage showing Albarran fueling his personal vehicle "dozens of times" and dozens of questionable transactions with no clear union purpose.

When questioned, Albarran claimed it was "cheaper for the union to just pay for fuel" than reimburse his mileage.

The UFLAC Treasurer who uncovered these issues has filed a report to the IAFF which is currently conducting an audit of UFLAC's finances, including the use of union credit cards, as part of the Walker investigation.

Albarran has since retired from the fire department and returned the vehicle. UFLAC refunded his \$4000 payment. However, with the Treasurer's report filed with the IAFF, it is possible Albarran will also be separately investigated for misappropriation of union funds.

Take Away:

The Walker and Albarran cases highlight a critical truth: Without oversight, even trusted leaders can abuse their positions. Whether it's simple misuse or complex fraud, these examples reinforce the need for stronger internal controls.

To safeguard your organization, make sure you:

- ❖ Establish clear financial policies and enforce them
- ❖ Provide regular training to officers and board members
- ❖ Maintain strong leadership oversight
- ❖ Conduct independent audits
- ❖ Report any financial irregularities immediately.

Integrity matters. Transparency matters. And oversight prevents damage that can take years to repair.

Stay Safe and Informed!