



LINA HIDALGO

March 11, 2026

Dear Chairman Phillips and Mr. Boleman,

Last night, I tried to bring a fellow elected official, her two children, and the parents of recently deceased U.S. Air Force First Sergeant David Saravia to the Houston rodeo performance. They are also the parents of an active duty military service member.

When I tried to walk onto the chute ticket area (“the dirt”), as I have always done, including earlier this week, rodeo committee members told me we weren’t able to enter because I didn’t have a wristband. I have always been allowed on the dirt based on the county’s relationship with the rodeo, regardless of wristband. Nobody has ever told me I needed a special pass to access the dirt. I don’t remember I or my guests ever wearing one and pictures show that. Nobody ever told me those seats were \$425. I assumed that area was for friends of rodeo leaders or for rodeo leaders or such.

When I tried to ask that my guests be let in, the rodeo committee members first said the kids could stand in the back, but then proceeded to block the kids and mom from entering, grabbed me, shoved me, and threatened to arrest me. Even after I offered to leave if it meant that my guest and her kids were allowed to stay and finish watching the concert, the rodeo removed her and the kids from the dirt entirely. I had already been removed from the dirt.

At one point, a man in the crowd started heckling the little girl. At which point her mom asked a rodeo official to please tell the man to stop heckling her daughter. His response was, “well, I told you to leave.” She and the kids had not been asked to leave. It was me they were shoving. He proceeded to get uncomfortably close to the mom, who felt she was going to be shoved herself.

In my role as Harris County Judge, I have never accepted anything inappropriately or used my role to personally enrich myself even though many others have. I understand the rodeo committee members have a job to do. They are trying to keep thousands of people safe at the largest rodeo in the world. I did not want to prevent the committee members from doing their jobs, nor was I trying to take advantage of ‘privileges’ or call in favors. I was not even interested in seeing the concert. I was only interested in helping community members enjoy an important event.

Harris County has always enjoyed a collaborative relationship with the rodeo. The county owns and leases NRG stadium to HLSR, and by virtue of my position I am Ex Oficio Director of the Rodeo. The Harris County Sports & Convention Corporation – NRG Park provides Harris County with tickets to the rodeo every night so that community leaders can bring partners and stakeholders and celebrate an important event together as a community.

The Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo means so much to the Houston and Harris County community. In addition to the community pride it brings to our region, it also brings an incredible economic impact and provides millions of dollars in scholarships to local students. Some of my favorite memories during my time in office are riding into the stadium on horseback during Grand Entry, celebrating at the Black Heritage Day annual gala, and talking with folks in the community before the concerts.

I am bringing this to the public's attention because last night was not reflective of the spirit of the rodeo, and I hope it doesn't ever happen to anyone again. I, along with all of Harris County, was thrilled when Pat Mann Phillips was elected as the first female chair of HLSR after decades of male leadership. I have fought against 'good ol boys clubs' since I was first elected, and it's important to me that the rodeo be a safe space for everyone in Harris County. No one should be treated the way we were treated, whether they are an elected official or not. I felt disrespected, threatened and physically unsafe – as did my guests and the kids.

While I appreciate the work that the rodeo staff and volunteers do to manage such a large event, I cannot be complacent.

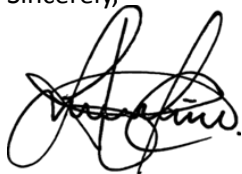
I wonder, if I had been a male county executive, would they have reacted the same way? Would they have thrown a male Harris County executive's guest with their young daughter and son out of the Harris County stadium? Would they have gone up to a male guest's children and yanked them out of a seat?

I will not go near that area again. But I have never felt so unempowered as a woman as I did yesterday.

These days, not only are we fighting a war abroad, but some people, mostly white men, have felt emboldened to treat others, particularly Hispanics with physical force. I don't travel without my passport anymore. Many of us do, especially those of us who are not white-passing.

I want the HLSR leadership to know that constituents of color and women, like me, deserve to be physically safe and to be treated with dignity. I hope nobody else experiences behavior like this.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lina Hidalgo', written in a cursive style.

Lina Hidalgo
Harris County Judge