

La Mota Co-Owner and CEO Rosa Cazares Removed From Emerge Oregon Board

The board voted to remove Cazares one week after WW reported on her companies' tax liens and lawsuits amid generous political giving.

By [Sophie Peel](#) April 05, 2023 at 9:28 pm PDT

The co-owner of the second-largest dispensary chain in Oregon, Rosa Cazares of La Mota, was removed Wednesday from the board of the political training academy Emerge Oregon. The board's decision comes one week after [WW's March 29 cover story](#) about the financial and legal issues at Cazares' companies.

Cazares, the 34-year-old co-owner and CEO of the La Mota chain, has served as vice chair of Emerge Oregon, which trains women to run for office, since early 2022. That position was a key part of Cazares' own foray into politics, which included contributions to and fundraisers for Oregon's top Democrats. Cazares told people she intended to run for governor herself someday.

But after WW's story that [revealed \\$3 million in tax liens filed against the company and its leaders](#), as well as 30 lawsuits against Cazares, her partner Aaron Mitchell or La Mota entities, some filed by vendors seeking payment, the Emerge board voted during a Wednesday afternoon meeting to remove Cazares.

"Rosa is no longer serving on the Emerge Oregon Board," says Emerge executive director Annie Ellison. "We deeply appreciate Rosa's commitment to our mission of uplifting the next generation of women leaders."

Emerge divulged no further details about the board meeting. By 7 pm Wednesday, [Emerge Oregon's website](#) no longer listed Cazares as vice chair of the board.

An attorney representing Cazares did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Cazares and her longtime partner, Mitchell, moved from Florida to Oregon in 2009 to break into the state's medical marijuana market. Once the state legalized recreational weed in 2015, the couple built a wide footprint across the state that includes weed farms, processing facilities, warehouses, and at least 32 dispensaries.

The couple launched themselves into politics abruptly in 2019. Within three years' time, the couple contributed over \$200,000 to Democrats running for office, including Gov. Tina Kotek, Secretary of State Shemia Fagan and former Bureau of Labor & Industry Commissioner Val Hoyle, who was elected to Congress.

As the owners opened new dispensaries, filed over 70 distinct LLCs with the state, and bought more than 40 Oregon properties, the Oregon Department of Revenue issued tax liens against the couple and various LLCs they control totaling over \$1.6 million, including for over \$592,000 in marijuana sales taxes dating back to 2017. (It's unclear how much of those taxes they've since paid off, but at least \$137,000 in delinquent marijuana taxes have since been paid.)

Meanwhile, Fagan and Kotek remain silent. They did not reply when *WW* asked again this week if they would return political contributions made by the company and its founders; nor has either politician said whether they would stop accepting campaign money from them in future.

Both officials received substantial political contributions from the cannabis power couple over the past two years. But the pair went further than just giving money: Cazares and Mitchell hosted intimate fundraising parties for Kotek and Fagan last year at a Northwest mansion from which they were later evicted. The couple also co-hosted a pickleball tournament last summer for Kotek and a black-tie gala for her in October, on the eve of her gubernatorial victory.