

ALERT

# Former U.S. House Member Found Guilty of Violating FARA

May 8, 2026

On May 1, 2026, former U.S. Rep. David Rivera of Florida was found guilty by a federal jury in Miami of failing to register as a foreign agent pursuant to the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA). FARA requires that any person engaged in political or quasi-political (e.g., public relations) activities in the United States on behalf of foreign interests register their activities with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) absent an exemption to FARA registration. Former Rep. Rivera was found to have obtained a \$50 million contract to his consulting firm from a subsidiary of Venezuela's state-owned and state-controlled oil company, *Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A.*, in order to advance the interests of the Venezuelan regime in the United States without registering under FARA. Rivera held political office first as a state lawmaker and later as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, where he served from 2011 to 2013.

The jury found Rivera "guilty of conspiracy to violate FARA, a violation of FARA, conspiracy to commit money laundering, and four counts of engaging in transactions in criminally derived property." Esther Nuhfer, an associate of Rivera, was convicted of "conspiracy to violate FARA, a violation of FARA, conspiracy to commit money laundering, and one count of engaging in transactions in criminally derived property." According to a DOJ press release, Rivera and Nuhfer lobbied U.S. officials, including then-Sen. Marco Rubio and Rep. Pete Sessions, and arranged meetings between U.S. policymakers and high-ranking Venezuelan officials, including then-President Nicolas Maduro and then-Foreign Minister Delcy Rodriguez. Rivera was found to have "accepted millions tied to the Maduro regime, concealed that relationship from the United States government, and used trusted personal and political relationships to

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secretly advance the interests of Venezuela's regime." Rivera faces a maximum prison sentence of 60 years; Nuhfer faces a maximum sentence of 30 years.

Rivera's criminal conviction follows other recent high-profile criminal prosecutions under FARA, including of former members of Congress and members of the entertainment industry. While criminal penalties under the statute are reserved for knowing and willful violations of the statute, and criminal enforcement under FARA is relatively rare - and has become even more so under the current Administration, FARA violations can and do result in significant criminal penalties, including prison. FARA violations can also result in civil penalties and substantial reputational harm. Particularly given the substantial penalties that can result from violations of the statute, it is critical that FARA compliance remains a priority for those with foreign clients who operate in the political and quasi-political space. Wiley's FARA Handbook provides further information on FARA and what may be on the horizon for FARA enforcement.

For more information on FARA and our related capabilities, please contact the attorney listed on this alert.

*Connor Nevin, an International Trade Paralegal at Wiley Rein LLP, contributed to this alert.*