

# Embattled South Euclid representative responds to allegations, wants legislative privileges restored

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COLUMBUS, Ohio — An embattled Democratic state representative from South Euclid says he's lost legal work and is accusing House leadership of double standards in how it's dealt with him after colleagues accused him of erratic conduct that eventually prompted one fellow lawmaker to seek a restraining order against him.

Earlier this week, state Rep. Elliot Forhan sent a 13-page memo to House Minority Leader Allison Russo, the top House Democrat, responding point by point [to a memo Russo released last month detailing an internal caucus investigation into Forhan's behavior](#).

In the memo, Forhan largely contested details in the report, a compilation of interviews with staff, lawmakers, lobbyists and other Statehouse figures. He said many episodes were mischaracterized and that he doesn't remember two incidents.

He also took issue with how the memo portrayed him as potentially violent, when none of the actual underlying allegations accuse him of physical violence. As he has previously, [he also denied visiting state Rep. Juanita Brent's home last month](#), which Brent has said prompted her to file a police report and seek a court order that bars Forhan from being near her, except during official legislative business.

"I was never violent. I was never dangerous. I never abused anyone," Forhan wrote. "The damage done to me by the release of Russo's memo, the choice to use those words and the subsequent events that Leader Russo initiated is real and substantial. Leader Russo should correct the record to stop the ongoing harm and permit me to try to regain what I lost as a result."

He noted that one Republican lawmaker was accused of assaulting a protester earlier this year while another, now-former state Rep. Bob Young, was charged

and [ultimately convicted of hitting his wife](#). Neither were punished, [though Young resigned](#) under pressure from colleagues.

Forhan, meanwhile, saw his Statehouse access badge revoked, his legislative aide reassigned and lost his office last month, moves House Speaker Jason Stephens performed the week after Russo stripped Forhan of his committee assignments.

Asked about Forhan's memo, Russo said in a statement: "There is a restraining order that prevents Rep. Forhan from legally being in proximity to another member of the Democratic caucus. We continue to make accommodations for him to participate in Democratic caucus business. Rep. Forhan is certainly able to give his version of how he perceives his behavior and its impact on others."

Forhan told cleveland.com and The Plain Dealer he's now working on a different floor in a state office tower in Columbus in an office that previously was assigned to an aide. Without a Statehouse badge, he said he's been told to leave when the building closes at 5 p.m. He's been escorted around the Statehouse by an assistant sergeant-at-arms, who provide security.

Forhan said that he hasn't heard from either Republican Attorney General Dave Yost – whom Stephens asked to launch an investigation into the allegation last month – or from Cleveland police. When asked if he has any regrets about his behavior, Forhan said he doesn't regret supporting Israel, an issue that preceded a conflict with a colleague, which colleagues said led Forhan to shout profanities at them, just before the report's release.

"In general, I'm not going to back down from standing up for myself or standing up for our values," Forhan said.

A report documenting House Democrats' investigation into Forhan was released last month, the same day [he got into a confrontation with a Democratic colleague](#), Rep. Munira Abdullahi of Columbus, prior to a caucus meeting. Abdullahi had taken issue with a video Forhan posted on social media saying a House staffer had asked him to move an Israeli flag that he had displayed outside his door into his office. Abdullahi felt the video unfairly singled the aide out for public criticism. Forhan previously had faced criticism in his district for supportive statements he'd made about Palestine.

The incident is the latest instance in which Forhan, who's serving his first-two year term after winning office in November 2022, has upset colleagues for being overly aggressive and confrontational. Russo [reprimanded him in May](#) over his treatment of a Cleveland Heights hairdresser who had traveled to Columbus to testify in opposition to a cosmetology regulation bill that Forhan supported.

Forhan, who represents a heavily Democratic district, is expected to draw challengers in the Democratic primary election in March.