

Letter: El Dorado County chamber ethics questioned

To the community,

How do you know when someone has crossed a line of ethical standards? It's a tough topic because it is a subjective concept and many people will have a different point of view. What if it's even bigger than that? What if it's an entity that receives taxpayer funding that crosses that line? Would you request that its funding be revoked until it cleans up its act and makes changes in its political practices?

I'm sitting here at a Board of Supervisors meeting waiting to ask the board to stop funding El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce programs until the chamber makes changes so that there is a clear distinction between its political activities and regular chamber activities.

Why? Because the county chamber has shown a consistent pattern of mixing its political activities with its regular activities, and it has recently crossed the line of what most people would consider ethical practices. The most recent infraction was the Town Hall Phone Meeting hosted by El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce board member Mike Kobus, owner of Koby Pest Control, on the evening of Sept. 24, 2014. Mr. Kobus stated misinformation about the measures and its proponents. I'm going to stop sugarcoating it here, Mr. Kobus flat out lied about the measures and their proponents.

According to California Election Code Section 20501. (b):

"A person who is a sponsor of a sponsored committee, as defined by Section 82048.7 of the Government Code, is liable for any slander or libel committed by the sponsored committee if the sponsor willfully and knowingly directs or permits the libel or slander."

The sponsor of the phone meeting was the El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce, a 501c6 organization, of which Mr. Kobus is a board member. The Chamber also has a Political Action Committee, which has previously spent over \$70,000 against all grassroots efforts to put land use measures on the November ballot. A request will be made to the Fair Political Practices Commission to investigate whether the chamber has overstepped the boundaries of what is allowed in its campaign against the measures by using lies to scare voters.

The amount of lies in Mr. Kobus' phone meeting was astonishing. He reached out into people's homes over the phone to intentionally spread misinformation and cause confusion. An uninformed listener would be led to believe that Mr. Kobus is an expert about these measures, when in fact he lumped all of the measures together and mixed up and distorted the facts. For example, Measure 0 is the green petition that was part of the 1-2-3 initiatives. Measure 0 simply removes urban boundary lines that make existing rural communities a target for high density development. Mr. Kobus debated with one caller that Measure 0 has a kill clause in it that will wipe out all of the other measures if it got the most votes. That is an absolutely erroneous statement because Sacramento-based Region Builders' Measure N has the kill clause in it, which is one of many reasons I am opposed to Measure N.

Sue Taylor, a Measure 0 proponent, agreed with a caller that said, "Follow the Money." Taylor went on to say, "Mike Kobus should have explained that it is with the Chamber's Board members and directors where the money lays... such as Sierra Pacific Industries, PG&E, AT&T, The Mountain Democrat, and Kirk Bone of Parker Development who developed Serrano and is proposing the Marble Valley development project. There is a lot riding on this election for these people."

Further updates will be published online as the inquiry progresses.

Lori Parlin, proponent of Measure 0