

Opinion: Sac Bee needs to get facts correct

By Larry Weitzman

On Nov. 19, the *Sacramento Bee* in its inimitable style wrote an editorial entitled “El Dorado County deserves better” which repeated the same old lies by writing, “Both an outside firm’s assessment of county government and a county grand jury found a deeply dysfunctional government in which bullying, intimidation and disrespect run rampant.”



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The editorial contended that the now terminated Terri Daly was trying to “turn around the culture of the county administration.” In an email to the editorial page editor, Dan Morain, I asked the question if they read the Van Dermyden Maddux report assessment of EDC government sometimes known as the “climate of fear” and the grand Jury report? The response was written by one of their editorial writers, Mariel Garza, and it said, “I don’t know where you get the idea we didn’t read the report. We did.” The *Bee*’s reading of the report leads me to believe English must be their fourth language, as they didn’t comprehend anything they read by writing their editorial.

Maybe the *Sac Bee* can read the very plain English as published in *Lake Tahoe News*, just the facts, not emotion. The claims as asserted by Daly and the GJ report that attempted to destroy

County Auditor Joe Harn was that he was a bully and that there was a culture of fear in the county. Unfortunately, the Van Dermeyden Maddux "study" showed absolutely no such thing and if there were a "climate of fear", it was created by Daly.

Here are the facts from the Van Dermeyden study: The highest employee satisfaction rating in county departments consisting of four or more employees was, you guessed it, Harn's Auditor-Controller's Office at 92 percent. The survey was secret and anonymous. Some of the lowest satisfaction ratings were in the CAO's office with the Community Development Agency scoring the lowest at 22 percent. Guess who headed the CDA? That's right Kim Kerr, Daly's handpicked candidate for the position of assistant CAO. Kerr was also forced out of EDC as she submitted her resignation a week after Daly was forced out. If there were a bully in EDC's administration, it sounds like it was Kerr.

Another low scoring department within the CAO's office was IT at 41 percent, which was run by Daly's handpicked head Kelly Webb. Webb has since been demoted by the BOS because she was incompetent. What does that say about Daly? What does that say about the reading comprehension of the *Sac Bee* editorial writers?

Of the 1,934 people who were surveyed, only 11 mentioned harassment as an issue and the question as to workplace challenges only one commented as to bullying. There is a significantly higher percentage of bullying and harassment in kindergarten classes.

More positive numbers showed that 91 percent of those employees who responded said their work "makes a difference to the citizens of EDC." Eighty-seven percent of respondents said that their department "provides a high level of public service."

About 88 percent of the 86 percent who responded to the

question of the most desirable aspect of the workplace are (in order of descending percentage) the people, the work environment, the work itself, compensation and location. But the No. 1 response was the people. With results like those, one would have to understand that there is good employee morale in EDC and if there is a climate of fear, it is located within the CAO's office and created by Daly and Kerr. Since Daly's departure, according to employees within the CAO's office, the atmosphere has become more relaxed with less tension already.

Readers have to wonder what survey the *Sacramento Bee* read in assessing that there is a climate of fear in El Dorado County unless they are referring to the CAO's office itself. But that wasn't the case as the *Bee* looked at Daly as being the savior of EDC. In reading the executive summary of the Van Dermyden Maddux survey, one has to wonder of the *Bee's* ability to comprehend the questions and the survey results and tabulations. Maybe the *Bee* purposely didn't want to understand the results.

One important fact that remains unknown and which the authors of the study wouldn't reveal is how the data from the EDC survey stacks up against other jurisdictions. Perhaps the reason is that the survey results are some of the best when compared to other surveys.

The *Bee's* read of the grand jury report "A Prescription for Dysfunction" only adds to the *Bee's* failure of reading comprehension saying that the GJ "found a deeply dysfunctional government in which bullying, intimidation and disrespect run rampant." Again, it is the *Bee's* failure to comprehend the English written word. With respect to the allegations of criticism against the auditor, the GJ admits they don't know if the allegations are true when they wrote, "Whether or not the criticisms directed at the controller are true..." and they admitted they never investigated any of the allegations when they wrote "the GJ did not investigate the allegations made

against the auditor-controller following the county's workplace assessment...."

It sounded like Jonathan Gruber, the economist who designed Obamacare and who said, "The American voters are too stupid to understand," participated in writing the GJ report when it wrote, "the electorate has no valid basis for evaluating the performance of officials performing the specialized and sometimes esoteric duties of these offices (referring to the auditor, etc)."

Therefore any conclusion made by the GJ regarding these issues should be printed on toilet paper because that's their net worth, but that might be wasting toilet paper. If there is a dysfunction in EDC, it is in the GJ itself. Instead of being finders of fact, the GJ became political spin-doctors committing malpractice. Nothing they said in that report had any basis in fact. It was an attempt by Daly to take more control of the county. It reminds me of the latest Obama moves with bypassing our elected Congress and ignoring the results of the last election.

But the *Bee* was certainly correct about one thing; El Dorado County does deserve better. And with the termination of Daly and Kerr it hopefully finally will happen, but that is up to the BOS.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.