

Opinion: EDC supervisors are disenfranchising voters

By Larry Weitzman

The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors couldn't wait the five years as the County Charter provides for charter review, but instead used their power to impanel another Charter Review Committee early (three years after the last Charter Review Committee).

The results of this new CRC are another run at increasing the Board of Supervisors power and longevity. Sounds like a bunch of politicians wanting more power for themselves at the expense of taxpaying citizens, a quintumvirate of sorts. How selfish.



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In the last Charter Committee, there was an attempt to remove terms limits, which the voters put in place to prevent dynasties and concentrations of power understanding the theory so well stated by Lord Acton who said, "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." In the deliberations of the prior Charter Review Committee the attempt at eliminating of term limits was shot down and no such recommendation to the Board of Supervisors was made. Term limits create more participation in government by more citizens.

In another attempted power grab, the new Charter Review

Committee recommended to the Board of Supervisors to make our now elected auditor and treasurer appointed. It would also eliminate the election of other "non-constitutionally" elected county officials such as the recorder-clerk. Having an elected, independent auditor/controller and treasurer is one of the main purposes of having a charter county instead of a general law county. Charter counties provides for more voter control of government.

While only 14 of California's 58 counties have charters, they include about 70 percent of California's population. All of the populous counties in California are charter counties. It also provides the voters with greater checks and balances.

While there were some other duplicate and redundant recommendations which I will discuss in a later column, these two, the elimination of term limits and the elimination of an elected auditor/controller and treasurer, are the most significant. There are tantamount to a disenfranchisement of the voters.

It is unlikely that either recommendation will have success in our active voter participation and high voter turnout county, but there is another significant reason why these two items should not be placed on the ballot and that is the incredible waste of money. Sinister, evil forces will advertise to acquire more control of the county under banners like smoother, less confrontational government or such an idea will "allow a government that can get along or work better together." Sounds like a dictatorship. Our country is founded on the principle of checks and balances. The elimination of an independent auditor/controller will be like having the fox guarding the hen house adjacent to his Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant.

Interestingly, Sacramento County has a non-elected auditor-controller who serves at the pleasure of their Board of Supervisors and is riddled with debt. So much so that its

annual statement of net county position which totals net county assets against total liabilities the total net position number is a negative \$300 million. In El Dorado County where the auditor is truly independent as he is elected by the people, the total net position number is a positive \$242 million.

As to the treasurer, I once wrote a column about the county selling off delinquent property tax rolls for small short-term gain instead of waiting for longer term, much greater penalty of over 90 percent of the original tax. An inside deal that would have been bad for the county and allow some private people who were "connected" to make tidy profits, of course at taxpayer expense. It was the elected treasurer who alerted me to this "inside job."

Elections like this will cost money, a lot of money, with one side creating specious arguments of why you should surrender your voting franchise, while the forces of good will have to spend money explaining why term limits are important and why our elected officials should remain elected. Even in our little county, hundreds of thousand dollars will be spent on what will be a hopefully fruitless attempt at trying to strip you of you voting franchise.

Think about the other uses of this money: fixing roads, helping fight crime, helping seniors, protecting them from predators. But no, because of the Charter Review Committee's obsequiousness (remember the CRC is appointed by their respective supervisors), El Dorado County will possibly have an election that will waste a large amount of money while certainly enriching political operatives and spin doctor types in creating slogans and lies as to why you want to give up you hard fought voting rights.

Our County Charter was created about 24 years ago to protect the voters, increase their power, participation and say in government and the CRC wants to recommend to the Board of

Supervisors that the voters have their participation and power diminished. Besides the elimination of voter participation in the selection (election) of government officials meaning the creation of more unelected bureaucrats and an enlarged spoils system, it will be a huge waste of money along with the enrichment of the political class. This is exactly what former CAO Terri Day did and attempted to do in her zeal to have more control, such as the hiring of her unqualified friends, giving away county money and creating a climate of fear while not attending to county business and ignoring the warnings of independent, elected county officials. Daly's ignorance, while occurring five years ago, will eventually cost the county tens of millions of dollars.

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