Opinion: Briggs is a sore loser

By Larry Weitzman

Some people take their losses and move on, others are vindictive. Sometimes when you want retribution and revenge after a loss, your actions are not only spiteful and selfish, but costly. That can be said for termed-out El Dorado County Board of Supervisor Ron Briggs who will lose his $77,000 a year job at the end of the year.
Briggs, knowing he will soon be out of a job, made a run for another political office this past June – for EDC tax-collector/treasurer. He lost decisively.

So what does Briggs do? First, he attempts to eliminate the tax collector's office, along with other non-state mandated elected offices such as the all important controller-auditor's office from being elected to becoming appointed. Hey, if you can't win the election, maybe you can eliminate the elected office and get the appointment. (There is a Charter provision that prevents for one year elected officials from receiving such an appointment, but after a year it would be legal). It would also be a big raise in salary for Briggs. The idea of changing the office from elected to appointed is still ongoing. It is under consideration by the Charter Review Committee as I write this column. It is an attempt to disenfranchise the voters of El Dorado County among other things and the balancing act.

And such a move would be a huge power grab by the "never been elected to anything" appointed bureaucrat Terri Daly, the county CAO, as she would have the power of such an appointment according to other changes she wants in the charter.

Actually, the approximately $140,000 treasurer's salary is a

bit low for an experienced CPA. In fact in what could be a vindictive move by Briggs, it was Briggs who sponsored the move to lower the salaries of certain elected department heads, including his opponent in the election he lost. But the upshot of this story is that at the same time, the Board of Supervisors recently gave a huge 15 percent raise to all other county employees (except deputy sheriff's). Briggs reasoning certainly can't be he is saving the county money, as this countywide raise is certain to cost tens of millions of dollars annually. There are about 1,400 county employees who received this giant raise. And the BOS, Briggs included, just approved a raise for the part-time indigent legal defense panel of 10 percent. It was an annual increase of about $75,000 in their total monthly retainer (it went up about $600 a month for each of the panel of 10) whether they work or not (the retainer is just a bit more than $6,500 a month, more on this issue in another column). It is even more pay then received by some fulltime public defenders. The salary cut for the auditor and tax collector was purely vindictive. You see, the incentives he cut from the current auditor-controller and tax collector/treasurer would not have affected Briggs if he had been fortunate enough to have won the election, as he is not a CPA and not even qualified to sit for the exam. But there is a whole lot more to this.

In another vindictive, selfish move, Briggs has proposed an ordinance that would require that all monetary transactions involving EDC be payable to or name solely the County of El Dorado on the financial instrument period, not the Building Department of El Dorado County or Tax Collector or County Recorder or if a person is actually named, like William Shultz, recorder. Briggs probably thinks his adversary in the election had a name recognition advantage in the election. But what is worse is that his ordinance would prohibit the negotiating any check by the county with a name on the check such as Raffety, Schultz or another department head or the department itself. Briggs speciously thinks perhaps there is a

safety issue as if the named person might steal a check.

There are three very serious problems with Briggs' vindictive thinking. First, in all the years Raffety has been the tax collector and Shultz has been the county recorder, there has never been a problem with this issue. In other words, nothing is broken. Second, if a check were not made out exactly to EDC and had a department name or another department head's name on it, per the proposed policy, it would not be negotiable by the county. Think of all the computer generated, pre programmed property tax checks from homeowners' escrow accounts or checks from title companies to record deeds that would have to be returned and the tax penalty, bookkeeping nightmare that would ensue. Even bigger nightmares would occur for deeds not getting recorded timely because of an improperly made out check. It would make the rollout of Obamacare look like child's play. Those escrow holders will also be saddled with an expensive reprogramming. Many won't do it at all.

And thirdly, as it happens, a California code section covering the payment of property taxes (Revenue and Taxation Code Section 2611.6 (h)) requires that instructions on all tax bills with respect to tendering property tax payments must include the NAME (emphasis added) and mailing address of the TAX COLLECTOR (again emphasis added). So at least two things will happen anyway. One, the taxpayers who pay personal and real property tax will see who the tax collector is (which the elimination thereof appears to be the sole purpose of Briggs' ill thought out and ill advised ordinance) and two, it will cause confusion as to how to make out the check.

Under this proposed policy, any checks that are not made out to EDC will supposedly have to be returned. One other problem with eliminating the tax collector's name is that with the tax collector's name on the check it is another safeguard to ensure proper credit to the county property tax rolls for the taxpayer.
This entire proposal saddles the board with a needless waste

of valuable time regarding this ridiculous proposal. And for what? Because he lost the election, an elected position he wasn’t even qualified to run for pursuant to the Robert Citron law (Government Code Section 27000.7) created in 1998 to prevent another Orange County bankruptcy.

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