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WEAVER UNDER INVESTIGATION

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Glendale Councilman Dave Weaver is under investigation by the state agency that enforces campaign finance regulations in California. Tendrils of the scrutiny are touching on many of Weaver's activities in the city, including his controversial emperorship of fundraising for Glendale's Rose Parade float, all this according to numerous sources in City Hall and law enforcement who spoke on the condition they not be named.

In campaign reports Weaver filed in 2005, investigators have already identified at least 44 alleged violations of state laws related to campaign finance laws, sources say, and those findings are leading investigators to review reports for earlier campaigns, and other financial records.

I left voice mail messages for Weaver at his home, cell phone and city hall office explaining the substance of this report and asking for his comments. Those messages were not returned or acknowledged.

HOW IT ALL STARTED

According to the reliable and high-ranking sources, Glendale police and the Los Angeles County District Attorney's staff were working on a case and contacted Weaver for some information. Sources say that, while Weaver was being interviewed by the District Attorney's staff on a matter wherein he was not accused or suspected of any wrongdoing, Weaver told them he'd received a campaign donation of \$2,000 in cash from a particular individual in 2005. Due to ongoing investigations, and at the request of sources, that individual is not being named here.



Glendale Councilman Dave Weaver, under investigation.

It was apparently a surprise to the investigators when Weaver told them he had not reported the cash contribution on campaign finance reports as required by law. Instead, the councilman reportedly said, he contacted the donor at a later date and asked to be provided with the names of four people to whom four separate contributions of \$500 each would be attributed, supporters of his campaign for reelection last year.

“He seemed to think it was no big deal,” one source told me. “He said he was given a bundle of cash and was told it was being relayed through the guy handing it to him. Later on he figured he had better get some names to put on his campaign reports.”

According to multiple sources, Weaver said the individual giving him the cash was "likely not someone he wanted listed on finance reports made available to the public."

Under state campaign finance laws, candidates are not permitted to accept cash contributions in excess of \$99. The reason is simple enough – accountability. Campaign finance reporting is pointless if, in the unlikely event of an audit or investigation, contributions can't be documented by checks or credit card records to reveal their true sources.

There are no limits as to how much one can contribute to a candidate in a Glendale municipal race, but state law does require candidates to complete reports made available to the public that list the name, address, occupation and employer of every person contributing \$99 or more.

If the findings and admissions reported by previously reliable sources are true, Weaver should not have accepted the \$2,000 cash. Even if it had been in the form of a check, the law requires that Weaver report the actual source of the contribution – typically the name on the check – and not those individuals to whom someone handing over the money attributes the donation. That is, if I write my personal check to Dave Weaver and tell him it's from John Doe, as far as the law is concerned, the contribution is from me.

At the conclusion of Weaver's interviews with investigators, sources tell me it was explained to Weaver that they were obligated to report his admissions to the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC), the panel that oversees enforcement of California's Political Reform Act. That led to more discoveries and questions as to the way Weaver has been conducting business, but I'll come back to that in a moment.

I contacted the FPPC and asked for information about an investigation involving Weaver, but officials there cited the agency's practice of declining to confirm or deny whether any investigation is underway.

THE FPPC

In the circles of politics and journalism, the Enforcement Division of the FPPC is widely regarded as something of a paper tiger in California. With few investigators and a budget that is routinely slashed by some of the very elected officials subject to its enforcement powers – the state legislature and Governor – the FPPC has historically required those registering complaints about alleged

wrongdoing to provide virtually all of the documentation required to prove an allegation.

Even when at nearly full strength, the FPPC struggled to annually audit a small percentage of the various filings candidates and sitting city officials are required to submit. In municipal races, the bulk of what little oversight exists is limited to city clerks making certain that reports are filed on time, and that there are no glaring errors. Today the FPPC operating on even a shoestring budget is a utopian dream. It's forced to work with the equivalent of the plastic tip at the end of a shoelace.

Spot audits are conducted, but the subjects of those audits are drawn randomly from a variety of categories every two years. No candidate or political action committees in Glendale races have been audited in at least the last seven years, this according to information provided by the FPPC. The next drawing for random audits is to be held in 2007.

The commission does meet routinely, and often announces fines levied for wrongdoing. But the overwhelming majority of those are for blatant violations, such as officials who fail to file forms reporting their economic interests. Also seen frequently on the FPPC's docket are instances wherein a candidate reports receiving a contribution from a business or political action committee, but the firm or PAC fails to report making the donation as it should have. The reverse is also common, with donors reporting contributions, but candidates failing to report receipts in a timely manner.

MORE DISCOVERIES, MORE QUESTIONS

Despite the FPPC's current state, Weaver's admission to law enforcement got quick attention. It wasn't long before a review of campaign finance reports for Weaver's 2005 campaign turned up more questions. Chief among them, at a Feb. 2005 fundraiser held at the Royal Palace banquet facility in Glendale, Weaver reported receiving 40 contributions of exactly \$100. Further investigation revealed all were paid in cash, constituting roughly 40 additional violations.

Closer scrutiny of the those 40 contributions has led to even more questions. For example, two of the \$100 donations are reported to have come from waiters who worked at the banquet facility.

I can't claim to clearly recall every entry on every contribution report for candidates that I've ever reviewed in two decades. But I believe that, if there were even one previous example of a waiter working at a fund raiser contributing to a candidate, it would stand out in my mind.

Another anomaly involves two contributors at the same event whose occupations were listed by Weaver as “unemployed.” Together, the unemployed pair donated \$300 to help see Weaver reelected to the city council.

There were also donors with occupations listed as “student,” another highly unusual listing. Indeed, because the reports include address information, it appears that, in one household, two contributors listed as students and one listed as unemployed collectively gave \$300 to Weaver’s council campaign.

Attempts to contact the contributors listed were unsuccessful, as none of them were listed in public phonebooks. In addition, the waiters, unemployed contributors and students named in the campaign reports do not appear on the rolls of registered voters in Glendale.

THE STINKING ROSE RESURFACES

As is so often the case, questions led to more questions, and sources say investigators are now looking at Weaver’s work with Dreaming of Roses (DoR), a group led by Weaver to raise funds for annual construction of a float representing Glendale in Pasadena’s Rose Parade.

As I’ve reported previously and exclusively, Weaver’s handling of the finances and organization of DoR not only flouts sound business practices, but it directly disregards the bylaws of the supposed parent organization, the Glendale Rose Float Association (GRFA). You can read PDF versions of those previous reports by clicking [HERE](#) and [HERE](#).

To recap just some of those episodes, as he created the DoR and took the lead in its fund raising efforts, Weaver opened a bank account for DoR without the knowledge of the GRFA board of directors. They learned of it almost two years later, and then only after the Internal Revenue Service fined the GRFA for failing to report \$50,000 in revenues held in the account. That episode led to substantial penalties that were finally paid in recent months.

Weaver has had exclusive control over revenues and expenditures of the DoR, a reality he’s defended previously by saying his actions are overseen by “experts” he’s appointed to an ad hoc DoR committee.

Today the DoR continues to use the GRFA’s tax identification number as its own, and supposed accountings of DoR funds provided in response to questions and challenges in the past have been haphazard, incomplete and almost childish in their gross simplicity.

Some business and community leaders have expressed grave concern about Weaver’s tactics and potential for conflicted interests in soliciting contributions for DoR from the community. Weaver has proudly handed over donations of thousands of dollars while refusing to identify the contributors even to GRFA

board members, and he's solicited and received contributions to DoR as large as \$10,000 from business interests with matters before the city council at the time of the donation.

In the last two years Weaver has also been working with a woman who produces an annual "Miss Asia USA" beauty pageant, and it wasn't long before the DoR, Miss Asia USA and the city became intertwined.

The DoR was listed as a sponsor for the Miss Asia USA contest, and the contest as a sponsor for the DoR. The city of Glendale has also been listed as a sponsor of the pageant, providing services that city staff say were arranged by Weaver. Also among Miss Asia's newest sponsors, the names of developers doing business with the city have been popping up.

This past January it caused some surprise among GRFA supporters and members when two winners of the Miss Asia Pageant turned up to ride on the city's Rose Parade float, an appearance apparently arranged by Weaver. Weaver later assured board members that the contest producer was paying \$2,500 for each of the beauty queens to ride the float. But the DoR's sometimes bizarre record-keeping and refusal to release detailed financial reports have made it impossible to verify that claim.



A contestant for Miss Asia USA.

In addition, auctioning opportunities to ride on the float to the highest bidders has often been a big revenue source for the GRFA, but Weaver's arrangements eliminated that possibility for the two seats.



Miss Asia USA and Mrs. Asia USA ride Glendale's float despite storm clouds.

The Miss Asia USA pageant's public relations machinery widely advertised the Rose Parade appearance on Glendale's float, including publicity that lauded "Chairman Weaver" for his role in arranging it.

Despite repeated exposure of these and other incidents, supporters of the float program and Weaver have rallied to his defense time and again. Several have told me they have every confidence in Weaver's personal

assurances that the controversies are solely the product of fictions crafted by his political enemies, or those who are jealous of his success.

One especially memorable episode saw me asking the President of the GRFA about a report that the DoR had already awarded several hundred dollars in scholarships, part of Weaver's plan to see the DoR meet federal requirements to be deemed a charitable group. The president, an ardent fan of Weaver's, passionately assured me the report of scholarships having been awarded was "a lie." He speculated the false report was part of a campaign to make Weaver look bad when scholarship winners could not be identified and interviewed.

That official, GRFA President Garry Ackerman, was unaware the claim of scholarships having already been awarded came from Weaver himself, and it was published in a newsletter put out by the city of Glendale.

Others resisting attempts to hold Weaver accountable confess concern that, without him leading their efforts, taxpayer support for the annual float will vanish, ultimately leading to the end of a Rose Parade float representing Glendale, a tradition since 1911.

According to sources close to the investigation now underway, and given what has been learned thus far about Weaver's handling of cash and accounting records, investigators have decided to review financial records for the Dreaming of Roses 'committee' covering the last two years.



Miss Asia USA poses with Glendale Royalty, Dave Weaver (l) and GRFA Pres. Garry Ackerman (r).

In another story that was broken by this column, in 2002 it was learned that Weaver had borrowed \$80,000 from two prominent individuals in Glendale without ever revealing those arrangements in another report required by state law, a statement of economic interests. Those annual statements are intended to notify the public of any elected or appointed official's potential for conflicts of interest. Indeed, during the time Weaver had borrowed the money and failed to report the loans as required, he was also participating in votes to appoint the lenders to important city committees. One was a candidate for a seat on the city's planning board, and the other sat on the committee ostensibly overseeing the now infamous construction of the police headquarters building.

WEAVER'S RECORD

Weaver's grim cumulative record in financial matters and meeting reporting requirements now has investigators going much deeper into his activities than is the norm for office holders with a few glitches in their campaign finance reports.

In almost any other election year, Weaver's fourth place finish in last April's municipal contest would have seen him bounced from office. But because a fourth seat was left open by the early resignation of then-councilman Gus Gomez, Weaver managed to win the term with two years remaining.

Weaver faces another election contest at this time next year. After he'd apparently made a miraculous recovery from previous scandals, Weaver's colleagues had grudgingly arranged the process for him to be allowed to return to the Mayor's seat in May, 2006, a much sought-after, high-profile position for those who are chasing reelection.

Weaver has held the largely ceremonial position twice before, and each time stunned even many of his supporters with his imperious, high-handed pronouncements about the import of the office, and the deference he says must be shown by citizens, city staff and council members when he holds the seat.



*Councilman Ara Najarian,
perhaps Glendale's next Mayor in
Weaver's stead?*

But with the latest developments regarding his campaign finances and DoR, City Hall is rife with speculation that the council may now reverse its previous course, and instead name someone else as Mayor for the final year of Weaver's abbreviated term, council sophomore Ara Najarian.

If the past is any indication, Weaver will be infinitely more concerned about schemes related to his being denied the Mayor's seat than he will be about ample evidence that he's been taking wads of cash in both hands, and providing incomplete and misleading reports as to who it comes from and what he does with it.