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LIFETIME REWARDS FOR PUBLIC SERVANT?

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I desperately wish Glendale Mayor Dave Weaver had not provided yet another example of his seemingly boundless greed, or his limitless sense of entitlement and self-inflated importance. But his latest is a pip.

Listen, I get every bit as tired of writing about Weaver's fiascos as you may be tired of reading about him. This has happened from time to time over the last couple of decades in the various cities I've covered. One elected official goes on a tear, week after week, month after month – sometimes even year after year - finding new ways to rape the system, dupe the public and/or thwart public information.

When I wrote about a Burbank councilman who lied about his education and military experience, I WISH the dramatic delinquency in his taxes hadn't been discovered just days later. When a Glendale councilman was found to be casting votes that benefited his business partners, life would have been easier for me, too, if I hadn't then learned he was failing to report property he owned in city redevelopment project areas. And so on, and so on.



The same, old, boring official city photo of Mayor Dave Weaver - AGAIN.

Now, having written about the deceptions, irregularities and investigations that surround every facet of Weaver's public life, to say nothing of his craven effort to scoop up city freebies by the arm-load, I sincerely wish he hadn't come up with a new embarrassment. But he did.

It's not so much the perception problems I worry about: folks viewing a string of stories as some sort of personal campaign against an official. I credit readers with recognizing the newsworthiness and journalistic value of each individual report. What's killing me are the constant re-uses of the same old photos throughout this "Glendale Columns" page, and the need in each column to put the latest episode in context by summarizing so many previous reports.

At this point, Weaver-recap paragraphs by themselves are longer than some columns. Today, no recap. I'll just suggest you later scroll down this page for a review of Weaver's oeuvre.

OK, now I'm probably just stalling to avoid the tedium of another Weaver story. Let's get to the point. Glendale Mayor Dave Weaver is pursuing a unique new benefit for Glendale city council members. Moreover, he's proposed it under a formula that would make him the only current official who could qualify to receive it, with others years and even decades behind.

Weaver wants taxpayers to give "lifetime" health insurance coverage to council members and their families once the council member turns 65. But he doesn't want the benefit for every council member, like those lazy, selfish slugs who merely serve one or two terms. But having to serve three full terms seems excessive to Weaver. No, he'd like to see the benefit bestowed upon those who have served 10 years on the council.

OK, let's break for a guessing game. Because Weaver placed fourth in the last municipal election, a spot that would normally have seen him bounced from office, he's now serving the tail end of a term left behind when a councilman resigned. At the end of this abbreviated term, which follows his two full terms, guess how many years Weaver will have held a city council seat? If you guessed 10 years, pat yourself on the back.



Here piggy, piggy, piggy. Sooooooey!

On Sept. 5 Glendale's Director of Administrative Services, Robert Franz, crafted a memo estimating the cost of providing such a benefit. Because such policies would become part of the city's ongoing group health plan – though council members enjoy coverage far superior to that of rank and file employees – it's impossible to track the exact cost. Moreover, there's no way to know now how many future council members might eventually qualify for the benefit. Finally, of course, the specifics of each council member's age, the age of their spouse and their respective health issues could have impacts on the cost.

For the sake of example, Franz's memo estimated the cost of providing free lifetime insurance for the current city council, though Weaver is the only member who would qualify in the coming years. Franz estimated a total in cash payments of just under \$1 million. Inexplicably, the memo also offers the "Net present value cost," which is estimated at a bit more than \$400,000.

In this context, “net present values” are typically offered when we’re paying today for something that we’d otherwise have to pay for tomorrow. In the case of the proposed health insurance, however, Glendale’s costs would be incurred and paid at some time in the future. What a 2006 dollar is worth in 2020 isn’t relevant unless we get to pay that bill in 2006. A skeptic might suspect the net present value cost figure is misleading.

If I meet any skeptics, I’ll ask and let you know. To see the actual memo, [CLICK HERE](#).

Franz noted his memo was being written “Per the request of Mayor Weaver.” Franz told me the figures were provided by an outside consultant currently developing a fiscal analysis for the city on an unrelated matter.

Some of the sources I speak to in City Hall met Weaver’s request with excitement, an indication he intends to leave office next year, at which time he’d be losing the “executive” health insurance the city gives council members and their families. Weaver, who retired after more than three decades with the US Army Corps of Engineers, realized that leaving office would leave him without taxpayer paid health insurance for the first time in his adult life.

I don’t leap to the same conclusion, at least not the part about the insurance plan constituting proof Weaver will finally step down.

For starters, as of the most recent campaign finance report, on June 30 Weaver had \$8,500 in his campaign account. That’s a war chest compared to the piddling amount he had even after his first fundraiser before the 2005 election.

Weaver never seems to lack for acolytes, and because he’s dismissed literally every complaint about his missteps as the groundless product of conspiracies against him, he may see no reason to doubt he’ll pull out another win. Remember, even as his ballot results have proved more embarrassing with each subsequent election, placing well behind newcomers, he’s regarded every win as vindication.

Last, while Weaver has insisted all others accord him enormous dignity, respect and deference – whether those involved are hosts of a local benefit, the leadership of community groups, or mere citizens asking for information – he’s never been terribly disciplined in making sure his actual behavior is dignified. Thus, I wouldn’t find it surprising if he ran again, if only in even a distant hope of triumphantly vanquishing his critics. Weaver’s rarely shown an eversion to the risk of embarrassing himself, and his critics doubting the power of incumbency do so at their peril.

Preserving Weaver's health insurance wouldn't necessarily signal surrender. It could merely be a backstop plan, a layer of protection in the event he runs and his devious enemies finally succeed. Whichever way the election ball bounces, Weaver gets his booty.

Thanks to a pay raise the council instituted for itself last year, and given his council seat and various related appointments, Weaver can already earn more than \$52,000 annually for serving in the part-time job the City Charter characterizes as a volunteer position. That doesn't include the health insurance, car-allowances and other benefits already in place.

By that standard alone, providing lifetime health insurance is an outrageous imposition on taxpayers, whether it went to 10 council members, or one. But, of course, this benefit is clearly intended to enrich just one, and that's the man who proposed it: Dave Weaver.
