

# COUNTY OF EL DORADO

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TO: Board of Supervisors, County of El Dorado  
FROM: John R. Knight, District 1 Supervisor  
DATE: May 13, 2011  
RE: Mormon Island Relocation Cemetery

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John R. Knight", is written over the "FROM:" line of the memo.

**Issue:** The County of El Dorado owns or operates numerous cemeteries or cemetery districts throughout the county. It has only recently come to my attention, although known to others in the county, that the Mormon Island Relocation Cemetery has thirty-six (36) grave markers with a deeply offensive racial slur. These graves were relocated in 1954 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from the Negro Hill Cemetery.

**Discussion:** In 1954, eight (8) cemeteries and six (6) individual burials that were going to be flooded, Negro Hill Cemetery being one of them, were all exhumed and relocated to what is now known as the Mormon Island Relocation Cemetery.

This information regarding the 36 markers was brought to county staff in 2006 and in 2007 the Cemetery Advisory Committee voted to have these markers changed. In 2009, a local Boy Scout was looking for an Eagle Scout project and presented to the County a detailed plan to replace the markers. In addition, the Scout received a \$20,000 donation from AT&T to cover the costs for all the work. This plan was never carried out.

Recently, the California Prison Industry Authority, under the direction of General Manager Chuck Pattillo, extended an offer to the County to make and install replacement markers for the Mormon Island Relocation Cemetery. The California Prison Industry Authority (CALPIA) is an inmate work program that provides productive job opportunities for inmates in California correctional institutions. The plan, if approved, will allow the CALPIA to make the 36 replacement gravestones, remove the old ones, and install the new ones along with a plaque that explains the history of the cemetery. This will be done at no cost to the County of El Dorado.

**Recommendation:** It is my recommendation that the Board of Supervisors:

- 1) Receive a proposal by the California Prison Industry Authority (CALPIA) for replacement of the 36 markers at Mormon Island Relocation Cemetery
- 2) Authorize staff to work with the CALPIA for execution of their proposal
- 3) Authorize staff to work with any other groups, including AT&T, on available grant opportunities
- 4) Authorize Chairman to sign a letter of gratitude to the Eagle Scout who initially sought a solution to this matter, and thank him for his sincere efforts in attempting to replace the 36 headstones with an appropriate epitaph