



M. Lane Consent Calendar BOS #18  
12/10/2019

# Compass2Truth

*Citizens for Constitutional Liberty*

P.O. Box 598  
Coloma, CA 95613

December 8, 2019

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors  
Districts 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

**RE: 12/10/19 Consent Item #18 – \$5,000 Expenditure of Public Funds to Gold Trail Grange**

Gold Trail Grange partners with various groups and non-profits such as the American River Conservancy, Gold Discovery Park Association, Coloma-Lotus Chamber of Commerce, the Coloma Lotus Advisory Committee, and other members of the river community collectively known for decades as the “River Mafia Mob.” Everyone who has lived in this region for any length of time knows that the Mob controls CLNews which serves as the primary method to communicate their extreme liberal and biased agenda. They have a long history of hostility, especially toward conservative residents who have been disenfranchised and made to feel unwelcome in the Coloma Lotus community. Consequently an increasing number of individuals have opted out of CLNews or participating in Grange activities.

The government process can be much more transparent in terms of giving the public advance notice of this \$5,000 expenditure which was apparently predetermined and rubber-stamped under Consent without providing the community an opportunity to weigh in on the wisdom of using public resources for such purposes. A transparent approach would also reduce the perception that such decisions are made to curry political favor.

Additionally, past fundraising solicitations by the Grange have raised many questions about ethics. Those who do business with the Grange (or want to do business with the agency) may feel pressured to contribute to maintain positive relations. These solicitations also can look like “pay to play” to the public and the media.

Then there is the question of what this \$5,000 expenditure of public funds may earn Supervisor Parlin in political influence? Obviously Ms. Parlin obtains a benevolent image, while the nonprofit Grange gets the money. But such an arrangement can also serve as a route around restrictions or campaign contributions, allowing the Grange and their partners to curry favor with politicians, frequently without proper disclosure.

It is evident the Grange is not authentically representative of our community. Therefore we strongly oppose this misappropriation of taxpayer funds to an unaccountable, non-profit organization whose membership continues to steadily decline.

*Melody Lane*

Founder – *Compass2Truth*

# CALIFORNIA BROWN ACT

## PREAMBLE:

"The people, in delegating authority, do not give their public servants the right to decide what is good for the people to know and what is not good for them to know. The people do not yield their sovereignty to the bodies that serve them. The people insist on remaining informed to retain control over the legislative bodies they have created."

## CHAPTER V.

### RIGHTS OF THE PUBLIC

§54954.3 Public's right to testify at meetings. (c) The legislative body of a local agency shall not prohibit public criticism of the policies, procedures, programs, or services of the agency, or of the acts or omissions of the legislative body. Nothing in this subdivision shall confer any privilege or protection for expression beyond that otherwise provided by law. Care must be given to avoid violating the speech rights of speakers by suppressing opinions relevant to the business of the body.

As such, members of the public have broad constitutional rights to comment on any subject relating to the business of the governmental body. Any attempt to restrict the content of such speech must be narrowly tailored to effectuate a compelling state interest. Specifically, the courts found that policies that prohibited members of the public from criticizing school district employees were unconstitutional. (*Leventhal v. Vista Unified School Dist.* (1997) 973 F. Supp. 951; *Baca v. Moreno Valley Unified School Dist.* (1996) 936 F. Supp. 719.) These decisions found that prohibiting critical comments was a form of viewpoint discrimination and that such a prohibition promoted discussion artificially geared toward praising (and maintaining) the status quo, thereby foreclosing meaningful public dialog.

Where a member of the public raises an issue which has not yet come before the legislative body, the item may be briefly discussed but no action may be taken at that meeting. The purpose of the discussion is to permit a member of the public to raise an issue or problem with the legislative body or to permit the legislative body to provide information to the public, provide direction to its staff, or schedule the matter for a future meeting. (§ 54954.2(a).)