

PASADENA STAR-NEWS

OPINION

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Tuesday, August 26, 2008

Reorganization flawed

Re: "Is the county accountable," Our View, Aug. 16:

I would have to respectfully disagree with your conclusions that the new CEO position has improved efficiency, especially as it relates to the debacle of MLK and government openness.

Let me remind you that it was under Bill Fujioka's watch that we discovered that both Dr. Chernof and he failed to fulfill their promise to the Board of Supervisors and the people of Los Angeles County to ensure that all MLK employees would undergo a complete top to bottom assessment before being reassigned to any other position in the county.

As we later learned from a L.A. Times investigative report they failed miserably not only to deliver on this promise but miraculously losing all data pertaining discipline and documentation records of said employees and the CEO's office is just now — many months later — beginning to make good on this promise.

I've also found that since the adoption of this new position the county seems to have developed an even stronger aversion to government openness.

I have had to cite the Board and CEO's office several times for failing to implement the new state law, SB343, that requires that copies of reports given to governmental bodies such as our Board be made available to the public at least 72 hours prior to "discussion," not to mention the raising of the cap on how much the CEO and his "designee" can augment a county contract without Board approval — from 25 percent to 30 percent — which means at times millions of dollars get added to contracts that we never learn about.

So in this citizen's opinion I hardly find the new model much of an improvement over the old model.

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OPINION

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Saturday, August 16, 2008

Is the county accountable?

WHEN the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors voted to create a new level of bureaucracy last year, members said it would make government run better.

Supposedly the \$1.9 million reorganization of the top management at the County Hall of Administration — under which a group of five high-paid deputies would now answer to a main chief executive officer — would create new accountability.

It's unclear whether this new arrangement has resulted in a more efficiently run county government, but it has certainly shaken things up.

Last week, complaints about the new management surfaced, citing micromanagement and power grabs. Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, for one, grouched that the team was leaving people out of the loop, and behaving the way "Russia used to be."

Is this proof that restructuring has gone wrong? Or that it's gone right?

The evidence so far points to the latter, suggesting that the top management team is

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finally prodding a lazy and corpulent bureaucracy to improve operations and service.

Indeed, some have praised the "strike teams" that county CEO Bill Fujioka has sent in to deal with particularly bad situations.

For example, when a strike team invaded the Department of Children and Family Services after a series of audits found procurement, contracting and other problems, it must have upset a number of the irresponsible bureaucrats. Another strike team has been focusing on the MLK clinic and problem employees who had been shuffled around the county.

So far, this bellyaching sounds like so many sour grapes from a work force unused to being held accountable. But there's certainly still a potential for a "super-bureaucracy" to emerge, for the top-tier management to become as imperious and untouchable as, well, the supervisors themselves.

We certainly don't need another layer of that.