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In Our Opinion - RRFCD Overstepped

By Ukiah Daily Journal

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Last week's meeting of the Russian River Flood Control District was an embarrassing display of what happens when the elected leaders of a public organization begin to lose perspective.

Maybe it's been the stress of a severe drought year, but the members of the district board who voted last week to issue a censure to fellow member Lee Howard, overstepped the bounds of their elected mandates.

The unacceptable thing Mr. Howard did, according to them, was go to Sacramento and start asking questions about whether it was going to be legal for the district to give water to Redwood Valley Water District, when that district has no water right and is not a flood control district customer. They seem to think his mere presence in Sacramento implied that the board was behind the questions and they concluded that he had no right to do it.

Howard had a perfect right to do it. Not only is it a good question to ask - since there are lots of flood control district customers being cut back who may also be wondering if it's legal for the flood control district to give water to Redwood Valley - but it's an issue that frankly needed airing.

But more important, Mr. Howard made it clear everywhere he went in the state capital that he was not representing the flood control district. People he talked to confirmed that publicly.

The flood control district members say they are only making it crystal clear that Mr. Howard's views don't reflect their views. But that is exactly what Mr. Howard was doing in Sacramento. So if that's what they're doing, then how is he wrong to do the same?

So the only thing left to wonder is why the flood control district is made so uncomfortable by someone who is asking questions.

That, we think, is really what this is about. The flood control district is used to simply deciding what to do and doing it. This is not about whether Redwood Valley needs and should get some water from somewhere. Everyone - including Mr. Howard - believes they should. The question is whether it is OK to do it in an informal way, tossing aside concerns from lots of others, not just Mr. Howard.

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