

SOAR Advisory Board

September 16, 2010

Dear friends,

Please accept this notice as my letter of reluctant resignation. It is reluctant because you all have been a wonderful part of my life. I loved fighting the good fight through SOAR with you – and seeing principle win over special interest-fueled political power. As importantly, I love you, the many friends I've met as part of this organization. You have been my second family, and I have honestly shed more tears over separating from this group than nearly any other conflict I have ever faced. I am heartbroken.

I am still idealistic enough to believe in the principles that I thought SOAR was based upon, what we fought for: that the average citizens of Anaheim with a long-term stake in protecting the Resort (and the City it supports) should be heard over the special interests of the likes of SunCal. But our recent actions are evidence to me that SOAR is no longer the organization it was when we lugged those books from door to door and storefront to park. Therefore, it saddens me to say, I am no longer a good fit for your team.

Today's SOAR leadership increasingly works not for the good of the Resort, but for the desired outcome of the special interests represented on our own Advisory Committee and PAC Board. With the ends justified by the means, our standards change with the wind.

At our first PAC Board meeting, we established criteria for endorsement, which was then used to choose a candidate for 4th District Supervisor. The candidate must have "been there" for SOAR, with a solid track record for supporting the Resort. Candidates who were not registered SOAR members were immediately disqualified from consideration. We did not even invite those candidates to be interviewed. While I disagreed with the choice of the individual we endorsed for 4th District, I understood the standard, and agreed to put my own agenda on hold in order to represent the best interests of SOAR.

Sadly, that same criteria went out the window when it came time for the Mayor's endorsement. The candidate with strong SOAR credentials was rejected; the one endorsed instead had worked during SOAR's battle with a company ready to build more housing in the Resort should SunCal have prevailed.

Either we support the SOAR candidate or we support the one the majority believes to be the best candidate for the office regardless of SOAR involvement, but to bounce back and forth with our standards to fit the desired outcome is called "gaming the system" – and it is wrong, even when done by us rather than SunCal.

I am especially troubled at discovering that a number of our own members have direct conflicts of interest that were not disclosed during the discussion process. In one case, an individual who spoke out very negatively against Shirley McCracken didn't disclose being on Tom Tait's payroll, having collected \$2,000.00 from the Tait campaign during the most recent filing period (June 2010) as a "Campaign Consultant"! Others have business interests reliant upon the good graces of Tom Tait and/ or his direct supporters, some of those deals are worth many millions of dollars. None of this was disclosed at our meeting.

In any other setting, conflict of interest would at the very least be disclosed, and in many cases (such as being on the payroll of a campaign) the individuals would abstain from voting. Instead, it seems that many of our members dragged their own personal agendas into the room, and used SOAR as a favor-bank to curry the approval of those who might

offer a benefit to their business, or community group. The good of SOAR was barely even discussed, and my warning to watch our credibility was dismissed.

Rather than hearing about these conflicts of interest from the individuals involved, which would have been appropriate, I am hearing about them through the press, which is scary. I followed up and did my own research to establish that what several reporters are claiming appears true. Personally I want to have nothing to do with a compromise I tried to warn you about.

As predicted, I have heard from a number of community volunteers who no longer want to have anything to do with SOAR. I had recruited some to help walk precincts with us in October... not one of them will be participating now. Those most damaged by this conflict are Kris Murray and Gail Eastman, good candidates who deserve to have SOAR supporters walking for them – and who will now lose volunteer support that was scheduled to flow through our organization. I am trying to encourage those volunteers to offer themselves directly to the candidates if they feel they cannot don a SOAR T-shirt, but we left a sour taste in the mouths of some of our “old guard.”

Something especially likely to come back to haunt SOAR occurred during the Candidates Forum. While Jill Kanzler apparently had no knowledge of this issue at the time (I have since asked her about it, but not received a response), and I am sure it was merely an innocent set of circumstances, we not only used a member of Tait’s own campaign team as our time keeper, that time keeper inadvertently mis-timed the candidates, shorting Shirley McCracken on her time, while allowing Tom Tait his allotted time (and then some). There is videotape circulating of that faux-pas. While I know this individual to be of unimpeachable integrity, it leaves our organization open to charges of favoritism and bias. Given that our endorsement was decided within 24 hours of the Forum, we are in for some explaining. I am only glad for your sake that Jill Kanzler is as good at her job as she is; if anyone can spin that situation, it is she. I am not touching this one, not as an individual or as a blogger.

Some of my well-meaning friends in SOAR have told me I should stay, that I am a “voice of reason.” But frankly, I no longer see myself making a difference. I speak out against this behavior only to be ignored. If my voice is not heard before these slanted votes are taken, I am not going to be heard after the fact. I am sick to death of fielding criticism for decisions I was not in favor of to begin with.

I cannot be part of an organization that thinks it is OK to fudge the numbers to get what its leadership wants. I am told that I am naïve, that this is the way things are done, but I want to see SOAR set a standard and stick to it. Since SOAR has refused to apply the same rules to all of the players, and indeed appears to have bent the rules to the benefit of some over others, I will simply extract myself from the game.

Please remove my name from all SOAR materials, both written and electronic, prior to further communication with the public or our membership. I will take the time and passion I once devoted to SOAR, and offer myself to Shirley McCracken, in an effort to level the playing field in any way I can. I feel the personal need to help right a wrong I was unable to prevent.

Thank you again for letting me be part of the SOAR I once knew, and thank you for your understanding in accepting my resignation from the organization it is now.

I will always have a place in my life and at my table for you as individuals.

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