

Letter to the Editor 12-11-14

Banana Republic?

Re: "Within the law" (Diana Carloni, Letters, Dec. 3).

Ms. Carloni, an attorney and past chair of the Victor Valley College Bond Oversight Committee, claims the committee has worked "in accordance with the law." And, by "the law," she has previously made clear that she refers to the language of the Measure JJ Bond passed by Victor Valley voters in 2008. She claims I am trying to mislead the public.

My opinion is based on California Law (specifically, the California Education Code, Title 1, Division 1, Part 10, Chapter 1.5 "Strict Accountability in Local School Construction Bonds Act of 2000," and under this chapter, Article 1, paragraph 15272, which requires the Board of Trustees to "appoint a citizens' oversight committee ... to assure that funds are spent only on school and classroom improvements and for no other purposes." Of course, "school and classroom improvements" in the context of this Code Section means capital improvements (i.e., construction of buildings, classrooms, etc), as opposed to operating expenses like employee salaries and benefits.

There is nothing in this section of California law that refers to the oversight committee being bound by the language of bonds or what the voters approved. Surely, we all know and as Jonathan Gruber has expressed, the voters can easily be fooled into passing measures that don't conform to established, applicable law. Assuring that \$53 million of Measure JJ bond proceeds was to cover only costs of construction projects in the 1990s was the responsibility of the oversight committee, according to the law cited above. To date, neither VVC nor the CBOC has identified the specific construction costs of the four buildings that were paid for with debt incurred in 1997, which was refinanced with \$53 million of Measure JJ bond proceeds. Marshall Kagan and I have seen clear evidence that up to \$40 million of those funds were not spent on construction projects. So far, the only effort exerted by those responsible at VVC and the CBOC with respect to this issue is to ignore it and hope it goes away.

Perhaps we have already turned into a banana republic in which written, established laws don't mean anything.

Larry Hoover, Spring Valley Lake