

Column - Editor's Corner

January 17, 2025



Del Norte TRIPLICATE

In God We Trust...

I Remember it like it like it was yesterday: May 2014

I was in my first term as Del Norte District 1 Supervisor. The Supreme Court had just ruled that prayer (denominational or non-denominational) before government meetings was Constitutional. The case involved the Town of Greece, New York vs. Galloway.

David Finigan was the Board of Supervisors Chairman at the time. It's correct to assume Mr. Finigan and I didn't exactly exchange Holiday Greeting cards; nonetheless, as per my right to have an agenda placed for a Discussion/ Action item, I asked the Chairman to place the item of introducing an Invocation before our Supervisor meetings.

I thought I had a pretty good case to have the matter discussed. Afterall, the Assembly and State Senate both utilized a prayer before each convening. The House and US Senate conduct a prayer. I even asked former Supervisor Gerry Hemmingsen, careful not to violate the Brown Act, what he thought of my request. I remember his words clearly, "Well Roger, I'm a Christian and you're Jewish. Some might be offended by this prayer." My response was curt, "Gerry the prayer was non-denominational."

I made the request to the Chairman and he ignored it for over a week. I sent a second request...a few days past from Mr. Finigan to kindly place my item on the Agenda.

He declined my request to have the matter placed.

I asked him why. He responded he was not going to have my colleagues hear this discussion for fear of embarrassing the other supervisors. I was puzzled by the decline and retorted, "...then you leave me no choice."

By the next meeting, a dozen ministers and members of the Public came in support of the prayer. A few spoke in opposition, in a hostile manner toward me. One particular opponent who shall not be identified in this op/ed hoped I'd be pricked by God, then incorrectly identified me as a Christian nationalist. After her tirade, I advised her I was Jewish and the prayer would be non-denominational. Could the negative response be personal?

I was unsuccessful in introducing this item for discussion.

The next meeting, absent of a non-denominational a vote, The Chairman opened the meeting with a "...a Moment of silence," that still exists today at the BOS, City Council and DNUSD.

All these statements I've made are correct and can be substantiated by You Tube video.

I congratulate the Crescent City Harbor District commissioners for their bold stand and courage. Commissioners Weber, Nehmer, Shepherd, Schmidt and motion-maker Commissioner John Evans, you have my deepest respect.

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