

EDITORIAL: Ugly mailers and money are part of California's political spin cycle



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Good citizens that we are, we've thrown the dirty, ugly and lowdown campaign mailers into the recycling bin. Good riddance.

Most of us will forget them like a bad dream. But the corporations, trade groups and unions that paid for them, and their lobbyists, will remember them well.

The insiders, who spent millions to sway public opinion and elect and un-elect candidates, will have a direct financial interest when the state Legislature reconvenes and starts the conveyor belt of bills rolling.

In a nutshell, these insiders have an oversized say in what happens in California. You can even say that they are one of the biggest reasons that our state struggles to capitalize on all its talents and resources.

Nothing, perhaps, illustrates the behind-the-scenes Capitol power struggles than the race up north between two Democratic Assembly members for the 6th District seat in the state Senate. It made the battle in our neck of the

woods between challenger Luis Chavez and incumbent state Sen. Andy Vidak seem like an afternoon of milk and cookies.

The story starts with Caring for Californians, the spawn of \$2.5 million from the Service Employees International Union, and \$1.5 million from SEIU's ally, the California Association of Hospitals and Health Systems.

Caring for Californians unleashed a dishonest attack claiming that Assembly Member Roger Dickinson essentially countenanced child abuse when he was a Sacramento County supervisor. The entity came into existence Oct. 21, and proceeded to spend \$550,000 to eviscerate Dickinson, to the benefit of his opponent, Assembly Member Richard Pan, who won.

Caring and others of its ilk care little about Dickinson's stand on child protective services. The issue was his support for the ability of medical malpractice victims to sue. Dickinson, a lawyer, was funded by plaintiffs' lawyers. Pan, a doctor, is aligned with physicians, hospitals and insurance companies on the issue of malpractice litigation.

Illustrating the reality that there often is little difference between the parties, Caring for Californians gave \$1 million to the California Democratic Party, \$500,000 to the California Republican Party, and \$500,000 to a group that seeks to limit the right to sue.

Few mailers contained outright lies. But almost none were honest. They are headed to the dump, where they belong. But the campaign doesn't end. It merely enters a new phase.

Bills get introduced and come up for votes. Legislators get reminded who paid their way into the Capitol, or who might pay to defeat them the next time.

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