

## Letters to the editor: Poll heightens mistrust in oil plan

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### Poll heightens mistrust in oil plan

"Do you trust council members Bob Henderson, Greg Nordbak and Matrix Oil?" are among the questions being asked of Whittier residents by a public opinion pollster who refused to identify itself, so as to "maintain impartiality."

Coincidentally, this survey follows on Nordbak saying: "I'm hoping there's enough trust ... to let the five of us in public hash it out." (Whittier Daily News, July 30).

The public opinion poll does little to bolster trust in the City Council's impartiality when the time comes to evaluate the Environmental Impact Report. Apparently, a trusted someone is needed to sell the Matrix Oil project to residents. So, why is it that so many have questioned the integrity of council members Henderson and Nordbak in deciding to remove acreage from the Whittier Hills preserve?

The propriety of Councilman Nordbak's relationship with Matrix Oil's lobbyist, Mac McFarland, was questioned by the Whittier Daily News, and an ethics expert from Common Cause concluded that there was no financial conflict of interest, but "there might be an ethical problem."

Stated another way, will a "yes" vote for Matrix by Nordbak pass the smell test when viewed in light of his three-year relationship with McFarland? Nordbak may receive no financial gain, but McFarland, as a Matrix Oil "consultant" may have much to gain from influencing council member Nordbak's vote. A friend helping a friend constitutes "people bias."

There lies the ethical problem for Nordbak.

Another form of recognized bias is "factual bias."

Councilman Henderson has reported being a proponent of oil drilling since at least March 12, 2008. He has not been on record for considering a no-drilling alternative to the Matrix project. His stated objective is to perform the drilling in a way that respects the Whittier Hills preserve. But drill, he will.

Henderson told the Wall Street Journal "...when I purchased the old Chevron property, we demanded they give us the oil rights." ("The Derrick Next Door," April 29, 2009.) Certainly, owning the oil rights assured that Chevron operations would not be re-opened. Today, Henderson responds to Matrix Oil critics that the Whittier Hills preserve can be permanently protected by recording a conservation easement. The pivotal question is why didn't Henderson insist on recordation of a conservation easement when "he" purchased the property and demanded the oil rights? Drilling was in Whittier's future, notwithstanding the limitations of Proposition A.

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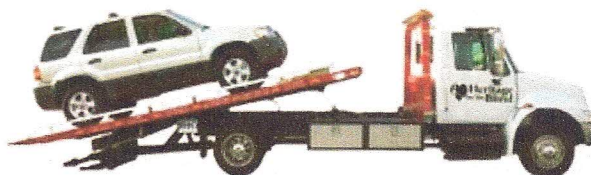
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During the 2009 campaign season, both Henderson and Nordbak stated they could not announce their position on the project until an Environmental Impact Report was published, relying on advice from the city attorney. However, since the election, Henderson has appeared at multiple events to counter the objections of project opponents. Shouldn't Matrix Oil be the face of the project? Matrix Oil is the project proponent, not the city, not Henderson. But Henderson has long been a trusted advocate for the Whittier Hills, so who better to sell Henderson's difficulty in maintaining impartiality in his commitment to open the Whittier Hills preserve to drilling (i.e. "factual bias")?

The Matrix-McFarland-Nordbak tie and Henderson's zeal to protect the Matrix Oil drilling project collectively fail the smell test. The current public opinion poll merely heighten levels of distrust.

Heriberto "Eddie" F. Diaz

Whittier

**Goodbye, Dr. Laura**

I wish I had a nickel for every time someone said, "You know who you remind me of? Dr. Laura."

In the last 20 years in private practice as a psychotherapist, I have listened to this comparison many times. I hadn't tuned into her radio program and put her in the same category as a David Viscott and eventually the

Dr. Phils of the world. These are the individuals that have a "cut to the chase" perspective of human suffering and troublesome behavior and answer their callers with a no-nonsense get-on-with-it-and-stop-whining set of instructions.

After a few years of hearing this comparison, I thought I should take a listen, and I was horrified.

Was it the call screeners who picked individuals with "sexy" problems or ones that would boost ratings? Was it the often interrupting and condescending nature of the host? Or was it the callers who thought their dilemmas could be solved in a five-minute soundbite? I am sure it was all three.

Hearing that Dr. Laura was calling it quits and reading the article entitled "Last call for Dr. Laura," I was relieved. When Kathleen Parker wrote: "The good Dr. Laura has done far outweighs her insensitivity in this case," I was truly puzzled. What data does the writer have for this assessment any more than knowing how much damage she has created over the years?

Talk radio is entertainment, so listener beware! People who suffer with life's problems should look elsewhere for hope and understand that problem solving is often a marathon and not a sprint. Dr. Laura has said many offensive things over the years, and invariably someone will take her place ... I just will not be one of them.

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