

Best and worst of City Hall

Tuesday, November 20, 2007

Dysfunction and incivility are two words that often come to mind when describing the politics of San Francisco City Hall. Grudges, petty spats, vengeance, turf wars and ideological rigidity have a way of getting in the way of attempts to reach common ground in the public interest.

Today we offer praise for a noteworthy exception. The Board of Supervisors today is expected to give unanimous approval to legislation by Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi to coordinate and streamline its various workforce development programs. San Francisco now spends at least \$30 million on programs spread through at least 11 city departments related to finding, training and placing workers in the public and private sector - and the waste and duplication in those programs "has just been astounding," Mirkarimi said.

The supervisor put together a remarkably broad coalition that including business, labor and nonprofit organizations. In a recent meeting at The Chronicle, leaders of those groups described their frustration with a piecemeal system that fails to adequately measure outcomes, such as employer satisfaction with workers who come through the system.

Mayor Gavin Newsom's administration embraced the Mirkarimi legislation's vision - and insisted that some of the efficiencies were underway. "It's part of our master plan," said Jesse Blout, head of the Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development, which will serve as the nerve center for steering funding and measuring outcomes.

Unfortunately, politics as usual reigns elsewhere at City Hall. Hopes for a new day rose on election night when Supervisor Aaron Peskin, the board president, showed up at Newsom's re-election victory party - and the mayor graciously acknowledged Peskin's presence. Within days, however, the long-simmering tensions between the two flared anew, with Newsom accusing Peskin of making threatening and potentially illegal late-night calls to city department heads and Peskin chiding Newsom for going to Hawaii for a long weekend getaway in the aftermath of the bay oil spill and for canceling out of an upcoming China trip.

The prospects for the two working together on anything of substance are not promising. At least they're both on the same side of Mirkarimi's workforce development measure.

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2007/11/20/EDV7TFBMI.DTL>

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