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John Frierson proved me wrong. He proved the [Department of Consumer Affairs](#) wrong. He proved everyone wrong.

The 82-year old Chairman of the [California State Athletic Commission](#) faced intense pressure from officials of the Department of Consumer Affairs to terminate George Dodd as Executive Director. Frierson, along with Dr. VanBuren Ross Lemons and the rest of the commission members, stood up to some of the most powerful forces at DCA in order to save George Dodd's job. While the focus of the story will be on Dodd and how effective/ineffective he will be as Executive Director given the politics right now in Sacramento, the truth is that the civil war between the DCA & CSAC is very real and very raw. In DCA minds, the CSAC has been their puppet for a long time. They were never prepared to face any sort of backlash, let alone board members who they approve/disapprove showing some spine and standing up against DCA's rubber-stamping mentality.

John Frierson led the charge in El Monte against the DCA. Whether George Dodd survives in a few months or not, Tuesday's rejection of DCA's termination request for George Dodd was a shocker to the Sacramento office. DCA sent their big guns to get Dodd removed from power. What happened on Tuesday was the equivalent of a mob boss sending the family to take out someone, only to have the family come back home and tell him that they didn't get the job done. The family can plead for time and a retrenchment of strategy, but in a results-oriented business you either get the job done or you don't. DCA didn't get the job done. John Frierson stood up to DCA. Members of the California combat sports community stood up in support of Dodd, not just to back him but to also send Sacramento a message that DCA has screwed up things long enough in the state and made it that much harder to run events in California.

How George Dodd even survived Tuesday's hearing is a remarkable accomplishment.

On the road to termination

Last Thursday, elements in Sacramento wanted the word spread that George Dodd had cleaned out his desk and had handed off assignments to others. Anti-Dodd forces, pro-Dodd forces, and even Dodd himself knew he was finished as Executive Director. Whether it be a DCA firing squad or forced resignation, his career was going to be finished.

On Friday, [we reported that Dodd was out as Executive Director](#). Not one person denied this report. However, a split emerged in regards to whether or not Dodd resigned in order to get severance or if he was going to put up a fight on Tuesday in El Monte, California for his due process hearing. Everyone in Sacramento was under the assumption that Dodd wouldn't put up a fight and that he would resign. After all, the DCA practically hinted

that fraud of taxpayer funds was happening. So, Dodd was surely responsible for these transgressions that DCA claimed, right?

How can someone be so right and yet so wrong? Everyone, including me, started asking ourselves this question.

Dodd was at the Staples Center boxing event last Saturday which featured Victor Ortiz vs. Josesito Lopez. Jimmy Lennon Jr. announced Dodd as the Executive Director. This raised some eyebrows, The day after the Staples fight, a promoter invited Dodd to attend his show. The promoter had been asking George to come see his event so that eventually he could be recommended for a license to promote regulated shows in California. Dodd, in the end, declined to go to the show because he didn't want to do so while having it labeled as appearing on official commission business. After all, he was ready to get terminated on Tuesday by DCA. This is the same DCA that threatened him in [the infamous insolvency letter](#) for personal liability of all CSAC debt, which was an absolutely illegal threat to make. How the legal department at DCA even thought that this was remotely a good idea is beyond me. It reeked of amateurism & vindictiveness.

What George Dodd didn't know during his final days before the El Monte hearing is that a groundswell of support was starting to build for him. Maybe the support for George was and is more about supporting someone in a proxy war against DCA, but the support nevertheless started developing. It was real. Jack Reiss, the referee for the Ortiz/Lopez fight, was at the El Monte hearing on Tuesday. Several promoters and officials from Golden Boy, All-Star Boxing, and Goossen-Tutor appeared at the termination hearing to stand up for Dodd.

From DCA's perspective, this was never supposed to happen. It was never supposed to happen because *they* didn't plan for it. They treated Dodd as persona non grata after the June 4th San Diego hearing. DCA was not interested in having others help or support Dodd's career after the commission went broke. They wanted him isolated and feeling screwed. Dodd's enemies were gleeful that his exit was near and that it would happen in an embarrassingly high-profile manner.

However, another development from the June 4th San Diego hearing would soon come into play. Anita Scuri, DCA legal counsel for decades, was leaving Consumer Affairs. This left Doreathea Johnson, another three decade-plus lifer at DCA legal, on her own. Soon, DCA would have to find a fresh face to replace Scuri at legal. They choose poorly. As the Tuesday hearing in El Monte approached, a lot of power brokers in California combat sports started taking sides in the DCA/CSAC civil war. Do we want to see DCA disband the CSAC and take all regulation into private with no transparency or do we defend Dodd in hopes of keeping the CSAC alive so there's a little bit of transparency? What DCA never anticipated is that promoters, fights, fans, and media who are notorious for covering their bases politically to kiss the right rings suddenly decided that right now was the time to take a stand against the huge, powerful bureaucratic behemoth.

How DCA uses their legal department to control CSAC decision making

Throughout the many years in which the Department of Consumer Affairs has exerted pressure on the CSAC for decision making, the most prominent avenue in which they've accomplished this task is by controlling the legal advice for the commission. If DCA legal says you should do something, you are supposed to follow orders.

What has always made this process curious is that [in the Business and Professions Code \(154\)](#), the commission is allowed to hire their own legal counsel and be independent of DCA's legal team.

Any and all matters relating to employment, tenure or discipline of employees of any board, agency or commission, shall be initiated by said board, agency or commission, but all such actions shall, before reference to the State Personnel Board, receive the approval of the appointing power.

To effect the purposes of Division 1 of this code and each agency of the department, employment of all personnel shall be in accord with Article XXIV of the Constitution, the law and rules and regulations of the State Personnel Board. Each board, agency or commission, shall select its employees from a list of eligibles obtained by the appointing power from the State Personnel Board. The person selected by the board, agency or commission to fill any position or vacancy shall thereafter be reported by the board, agency or commission, to the appointing power.

Instead of hiring their own legal counsel, CSAC has ended up taking orders from DCA legal on what decisions to make. Anita Scuri & Doreathea Johnson have been lynchpins in this process. Karen Chappelle, the controversial California Deputy AG in Los Angeles, is brought in whenever a fighter fails a drug test and she essentially acts as a prosecutor as far as advising the commission on what the punishment should be for the fighter in question. It's all a strange practice from the outside-looking-in and even stranger if you are on the inside. Why isn't the commission allowed to have their own legal counsel that is independent and free of conflicts?

This is how DCA has managed to obtain power for such a long time. They tell members on the commission board what they should do for making decisions based on the 'advice' of DCA legal, which is the equivalent of a bunch of government lifers pulling the puppet strings. Dorethea Johnson is a perfect example, and one that we'll focus on here because she had a role to play at the Tuesday hearing in El Monte, California.

Here's how DCA describes her track record:

“Doreathea Johnson, Deputy Director, Legal Affairs Division – Doreathea was appointed in 2000 and reappointed in 2004. She directs the activities of the Department's Legal Affairs Division and advises the Director, the Department's executive staff, and the staff and executive officers of DCA's regulatory entities.”

Here's how her track record is classified at [a Black Sacramento lawyer's association](#):

Doreathea Johnson, Deputy Director, Legal Affairs and Chief Counsel for the Department of Consumer Affairs. Appointed in 2000 and reappointed in 2006, directs the activities of the Department's Legal Division and advises the director, the department's executive staff and the staff and executive officers of the constituent boards, commissions and bureaus comprising of more than 42 regulatory agencies within the Department of Consumer Affairs.

Ms. Johnson, in addition to managing the three units within the Legal Division, including the Administrative Unit, Legal Services Unit and Legal Office, participates as a member of the Executive Team, advising and active involvement on complex legal, legislative, personnel contract and program issues, including presentation of testimony before the Legislature.

A graduate of the University of California's Hastings College of Law, Ms. Johnson is a long-term public employee with over 30 years of legal experience. Prior to her appointment as Chief Counsel, Ms. Johnson practiced as Senior Tax Counsel with the California Employment Development Department and as an Administrative Law Judge for the California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board. She has served as Judge Pro Tem of the Small Claims Court and Traffic Court of the Sacramento County Superior Courts, since 1990.

She is an active member in a number of professional organizations; including the State Bar Conference of Delegates, where she served as a board member. She served as a member of the State Bar's Judicial Nominee Evaluation's (JNE) Commission and currently serves on the County Bar's Judicial Evaluation Committee. She is also a member of the California Association of Black Lawyers, serving as a board member and former Vice President; Sacramento County Bar Association and a member of Women Lawyers of Sacramento and past President of the Wiley Manual Bar Association.

Ms. Johnson is also active in community-based organizations; she is a member and past President of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Eta Gamma Omega Chapter, and a board member of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women-Sacramento Chapter.

DCA legal has often advised and/or ordered many of the decisions made by the California State Athletic Commission. By using their legal department, DCA has manipulated CSAC decision making for a very long time. This is why DCA never anticipated that anyone would stand up to them, especially on an issue regarding a political figure like George Dodd. He was the DCA's hand-picked choice for Executive Director three years ago.

How CSAC smacked DCA around in El Monte

When I talked about DCA being all-in on terminating George Dodd as Executive Director, I wasn't kidding. On Tuesday, an estimated dozen officials — including Doreatha Johnson, budget analyst Brian Skewis, and deputy director Awet Kidane were sent with various bean counters to the CSAC meeting in El Monte. Stopping short of sending Denise Brown, the head honcho of DCA, this was the equivalent of DCA sending in their top guns to get the job done.

The irony & hypocrisy of DCA sending 12 officials to Southern California for a job termination hearing of George Dodd, a man accused of budget malfeasance with taxpayer dollars, is staggering. A DCA source indicated that the round-trip airplane tickets cost taxpayers an estimated \$7,500. I guess they don't like to fly Southwest Airlines. In addition, Cadillac Escalades were rented for the day. For rented Escalades to show up in the parking lot of the Bureau of Automotive Repair in El Monte, California was one of those truly iconic DCA moments. A hell of a statement made by DCA as far as how little they regard using taxpayer money. And they were there to see the job termination of a man they accused of misappropriating the usage of taxpayer money!

For George Dodd, DCA calling 11126 (the code of due process) was the equivalent of a pink slip. Only John Frierson, VanBuren Ross Lemons, and the other members of the CSAC board could save him. Going into the job termination hearing, there wasn't one person who would have bet you any sort of cash that Dodd would end up having his job saved, even if it was a temporary stay of execution.

As the hearing in El Monte was getting ready to start, there was only one member of the media at the session — [Josh Gross of ESPN](#). A person was videotaping the hearing but there was no live webcast online to watch.

While Doreatha Johnson & Awet Kidane were ready for the public comment to be over quickly, other members of DCA were sitting in the back of the room. Backbenchers. In the front of the room were attorneys not affiliated with DCA who had yellow legal pads, taking notes. Judges, referees, promoters, and officials started filing into the room to defend George Dodd. This immediately caught DCA officials off guard. The paranoia started to set in. The folks in attendance defending Dodd understood exactly what the stakes were should DCA take over full control of the California combat sports scene. It would be a political nightmare for anyone not part of the Sacramento clan.

DCA did not send Doreatha Johnson, Awet Kidane, Brian Skewis, and the rest of their staff to observe Dodd getting a reprieve. They were sent to be the judge, jury, and executioner of George Dodd's tenure as Executive Director. However, DCA was haunted by a ghost in the room — [the lawsuit filed in Los Angeles County Superior Court by inspector Dwayne "Woody" Woodard](#) based on claims of retaliation & age discrimination. The fact that Mr. Woodard went this route & opened the door for deposition of key players in DCA has rattled elements in Sacramento & Los Angeles. If Woodard could do this to DCA, what could George Dodd do given the threats DCA made

to him — in print, no less! The prospects of deposition are frightening for DCA power brokers on two levels. First, it could very well mean that different people give different versions of stories under deposition. Second, such deposition (transcripts) could be made public eventually. The prospects of the civil war being revealed for all to see between the DCA & CSAC is all too real now. It would open the doors for the state's top political writers to sink their teeth into covering the conflict. It is a worst-case scenario for DCA.

Brian Edwards, who was appointed less than a year ago to the CSAC, saw the writing on the wall and wanted no part of the civil war. He wanted no part of the political games from DCA. If a sharp mind like him wanted nothing to do with this mess, you can only imagine that others with good reputations are staying on the sidelines.

Everyone, including Dodd, knew the fix was in on Tuesday. DCA already had their new hand-picked choice ready to take over as interim CSAC Executive Director. How DCA thought they could argue to the commission members with a straight face that their new choice for Executive Director should be rubber-stamped, given the fact that they're arguing that their previous rubber-stamped appointee (George Dodd) should have his job terminated was quite a logical contortion act. The reason DCA thought they could get away with this is because they've gotten their way for so long in terms of controlling the decision making process. It was only natural for DCA and everybody else in the room, including Dodd, to think that nothing out of the ordinary was going to happen.

Then, the meeting started. Public comment was opened. John Frierson set time limits for three minutes per guest for public comment. Even with a three minute time limit, DCA officials in the audience were not happy with what said by the participants in the room. A groundswell of support for Dodd was on display for everyone to see on the record. The tide completely turned against DCA. This was not what DCA bargained for. Sacramento didn't send a dozen officials to El Monte to get any other result than the termination of George Dodd's career.

Immediately, DCA wondered who was orchestrating the events taking place in the room. Who was the wire-puller who brought all these people in to defend Dodd? Why weren't these promoters afraid of DCA? Why did they take a political stand against the almighty agency? The support for Dodd couldn't have possibly been organic, could it? After all, why would someone in public comment talk about DCA being guilty of micromanagement?

There was a turning point at the El Monte hearing that changed the game. The story of [the insolvency letter](#). The insolvency letter, which was sent to the members of the CSAC on May 31st, outlined a claim that on May 23rd there was a meeting between DCA & Dodd about the financial state of CSAC. Dodd was illegally threatened with personal liability of CSAC debt. The letter made Dodd look like an incompetent idiot & total cad for not telling the commission members about what was going on.

Instead of letting the insolvency letter speak for itself, an official from DCA made a startling remark. They told the commission that DCA had 18 meetings with Dodd over the commission's finances. 18 different meetings. What DCA was hoping to do with this remark was make Dodd out to be a completely irresponsible Executive Director. See, we warned him all these times what was about to happen... but, no, he didn't listen to us. We know what is best. That is what DCA thought the commissioners would takeaway from this remark.

Once the session for public comment was ended, a closed session occurred. A member of DCA suggested, instructed, and told the CSAC board members that George Dodd should be terminated as Executive Director. DCA applied intense pressure to get this done. And how did John Frierson react? He uttered the one word that nobody ever tells DCA – **“NO.”**

No... as in, no, we're not terminating Dodd on your behalf. No, we're not doing your dirty work here. No, we're not going to allow you to intimidate us. No, you made this mess and we're not going to let you get away with dispatching your hand-picked choice for another hand-picked choice. No, you are the ones who flew a dozen people in from Sacramento and rented out Escalades on the taxpayer's dime. This is your problem. George Dodd may have made mistakes, but nothing's going to change if you put in a new figurehead as Executive Director. You are the ones who approved the budget baselines. You signed off on everything. You instructed people to follow your orders by using the tagline of DCA legal to get things done. This mess happened on your watch. It was happening before George Dodd came into power and it's happening while George Dodd is in power.

DCA's remark, in which they claimed they had 18 different meetings with George Dodd over the commission's finances, blew up in their face. It destroyed their argument that the budgeting problems were simply Dodd's fault. Their own admission shot down the angle being put forth that Dodd was acting as a lone wolf. How can someone act like a lone wolf when DCA legal is telling him what decisions to make, which employees to use, and where to use them in the office or at events? How can DCA claim that Dodd is the only one responsible for the commission being broke when they admitted to having 18 different meetings with the man?

It's hard for DCA to plausibly make this claim when John Frierson can look out in the room and point out a dozen DCA officials flown in from Sacramento on round-trip airplane tickets and traveling around the state in rented Escalades.

John Frierson, VanBuren Ross Lemons, and the other CSAC board members saw through DCA's charade. They stood up to DCA and told them NO. DCA was not prepared for this. They never expected to have a worst case scenario where their minions, their puppets started to fight back. It was a loss of face for the DCA officials who flew down from Sacramento to get Dodd terminated and ended up not getting the job done. I can only imagine what the reaction was when these officials came back to Sacramento and gave their bosses the news that Dodd survived.

After the closed session, it was revealed that Dodd would be censured by the commission and that, for a 90 day period, he would work with the DCA under supervision to fix the budget problems. This decision immediately put both DCA & Dodd into unique political positions. Both will try to figure out how to survive each other, how to avoid lawsuits from each other, and how to actually get business done in an environment where there's every reason to believe that there will be paralysis by analysis for every decision made. Telling the DCA that they have to work with Dodd to fix the commission's budget is deliciously entertaining.

When the proceedings were over, Dodd hugged some people in the audience and shook hands. He survived a completely rigged process that no one, not even himself, believed he could have survived. Nobody pushes the DCA around. If Darrell Steinberg in the state Senate is careful about his dealings with DCA, you can only imagine how much political power they can exert on weaker politicians and government lifers.

While Dodd was relieved about the DCA kangaroo court proceedings shockingly going his way, the paranoia levels amongst the DCA officials ratcheted up significantly. What the hell just happened to us? How did we screw up this job termination process? Why did the public stand up for a guy that we portrayed as incompetent and not suitable for the job of Executive Director of the California State Athletic Commission? Why did John Frierson and the rest of the CSAC not follow our orders like good little soldiers? Why did this story get so public and why are these commoners standing up to us?

People in Sacramento will start turning on each other in a big way. With the lawsuit filed by Dwayne Woodard, the botched job termination of George Dodd, and CSAC Chairman John Frierson defying Sacramento's orders, key players in the Department of Consumer Affairs will be living in political fear of each other.

“You screwed up!”

“No, it's your fault!”

In the short-term, George Dodd's job security as Executive Director is not long for this world. He knows it, the anti-Dodd and pro-Dodd forces know it as well. Everyone understands what is about to play out here.

In the big picture, DCA got humiliated by citizens who have significantly less power than them. The only person DCA is accountable to is Governor Jerry Brown. For DCA's coup d'état of George Dodd, a relatively powerless politician in the grand scheme of California politics, to fail so spectacularly means that heads will roll. Some people will pay a heavy political price. Others will try to save their jobs by convincing DCA bosses that they need to retrench and come up with a new strategy. There's only one problem with this line of thinking — we're too far down the road now. The public is starting to take an interest in this story. The civil war between the Department of Consumer Affairs and the California State Athletic Commission is very real. Jobs are on the line. The health of California combat sports is at stake. All of the promoters, referees, judges, and inspectors who

showed up in El Monte, California on Tuesday (June 26th, 2012) understand this as well as anybody. DCA made the mistake that all bureaucracies make. They underestimated the intelligence & understanding that taxpayers and citizens have for what is going on in regards to their activities. A little education & activism goes a long way.

Given the track record of the Department of Consumer Affairs over the last five years with the CSAC, it's impossible to put the genie back in the bottle. Some of DCA's tactics & behavior have been exposed publicly. However, there are plenty of incidents, stories, and decisions that have yet to be exposed for public consumption. DCA knows this. They are worried about this process. They have every right to be concerned. DCA understands the value of a public scandal and how quickly government lifers can lose their jobs. The DCA nursing board scandal a few years ago was proof positive of how fast a government lifer can get ousted from their job once there's some sunlight.

And, yet, despite all of the fear & loathing in Sacramento, they are also prideful politicians who love to exert the full brunt of their power on others who aren't subservient to their orders. This is why John Frierson, the 82-year old Chairman of the CSAC, standing up to the DCA is such an interesting & incredible situation. Frierson can match up his political track record with any government lifer at DCA.

“You've been around since Jimmy Carter? I was around when Richard Nixon was President!”

DCA has to be cautious with how they handle any attacks on John Frierson. He's known Governor Brown for four decades. He's politically connected throughout the CADEM political machine. He is close with Curren Price Jr., a star in the state Senate who is quickly growing political power. He is close to Karen Bass, the former Assembly Speaker who is now in the US House of Representatives. He's a member of the [New Frontier Democratic Club](#) in Los Angeles. This is a badge of honor for him.

So, what can DCA do to an 82-year old who has seen it all in politics? If they go after him hard, he can portray their attacks on him as a witch hunt. If they try a smear campaign in the media & behind the scenes to make him out as a crazy, out of control senior citizen, it will backfire. They may know some of the skeletons in his closet but he also knows the skeletons in their closet, too. After all, he's been on the athletic commission for over a decade. That is unheard of. You have to have multiple political appointments in order to serve as long as he has at CSAC. Somebody clearly saw enough political value in keeping him around in power.

Which is why officials at the Department of Consumer Affairs are completely fit to be tied. John Frierson stood up to them. John Frierson stood up for George Dodd. John Frierson made a decision that went against conventional wisdom 99.8% of the time. Even if George Dodd is a goner in three months as Executive Director, John Frierson & VanBuren Ross Lemons temporarily saved the man's career by saying the one word that the Department of Consumer Affairs never expects people lower on their totem pole to ever tell them: **NO**.

- [Investigation: The future of combat sports in California](#) (May 6th)
- [Investigation: How did \(then\) 80 year old scandal-plagued politician John Frierson get an important job promotion?](#) (May 9th)
- [The politics of MMA's testosterone push & California's coming collapse](#) (June 7th)
- [California State Athletic Commission on a path towards insolvency, could get shut down](#) (June 10th, 2012)
- [PDF report now online – Blame game: DCA, CSAC civil war \(emergency 6/26 meeting set by DCA\)](#) (June 16th, 2012)
- [DCA/CSAC civil war: Taxpayers & promoters get a raw deal in California](#) (June 19th, 2012)
- [DCA outlines potential CSAC fraud; Dodd out as Executive Director](#) (June 22nd, 2012)
- [Amidst DCA/CSAC civil war chaos, a second CSAC member \(Brian Edwards\) is gone](#) (June 24th, 2012)
- [Source – George Dodd prepared for showdown w/ DCA on Tuesday](#) (June 24th, 2012)
- [DCA, CSAC face retaliation & age discrimination lawsuit](#) (June 25th, 2012)
- [Explaining the motives of the DCA/CSAC civil war](#) (June 26th, 2012)
- [Civil war: CSAC keeps George Dodd \(against DCA wishes\)](#) (June 26th, 2012)