In 2021, the California Department of Financial Protection and Innovation established the Office of Ombuds [sic]. According to the Department, the purpose of the office is "to act as an independent, impartial, and confidential resource to ensure complaints about DFPI staff or actions receive full and impartial review". However, the Department's description of the office leans heavily on apophasis:

The Office shall not, nor should any entity expect or authorize the Office to:

- Impose, interfere with, or modify any statutes, regulations, or laws, including any related policies, practices, or procedures followed or enforced by the DFPI;
- Make, change, or set aside a law, policy, or administrative decision;
- Make binding decisions or determine rights;
• Directly compel an entity or any person to implement the recommendations from the Office;

• Conduct an investigation that substitutes for administrative or judicial proceedings;

• Accept jurisdiction over an issue that is currently pending in a legal forum;

• Address any issue arising under a collective bargaining agreement or which falls within the purview of any federal, state, or local labor or employment law, rule, or regulation; or

• Act in a manner inconsistent with the jurisdiction of the Office

The term “ombuds” appears in no California statute, although some colleges have apparently adopted the term. See, e.g., Garstang v. Superior Court, 39 Cal. App. 4th 526, 534 (1995). Department apparently adopted the term in the mistaken belief that the portmanteau word “ombudsman” was somehow limited to males. In fact, the word is derived from the Old Norse umboð meaning commission or office and maðr meaning a human of either sex. By eliminating maðr, the Department's new office is the nonsensical "Office of the Office".

The fact that maðr is grammatically masculine should not be confused with its meaning. As my high school Latin instructor was fond of observing, the Latin word legio, referring to a Roman legion, is a feminine noun even though every member of the legion was male.

For those puzzled by the letter ð. This consonant appears in Old Norse, Old English and other languages. It is usually transliterated as "th" or "d". Thus, the Viking deity Oðin in English as Odin, even though that spelling does not quite correspond to the original pronunciation.

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