



San Diego County Water Authority And Its 24 Member Agencies

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News Release

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Assembly Bill Would Protect Water Ratepayers Across County

Board supports efforts to prevent voters from being disenfranchised

May 25, 2023 – The San Diego County Water Authority’s Board of Directors today voted to support Assembly Bill 530, which would ensure ratepayer protections when water districts separate.

The bill was authored by Assemblymember Tasha Boerner of Encinitas and sponsored by the City of San Diego. It seeks to amend California’s County Water Authority Act so that all voters within such a district can vote on proposed separations from an authority, actions that are also known as detachments. A majority vote in both the separating district and the County Water Authority would be necessary to complete a detachment.

The legislation was filed against the backdrop of two retail agencies seeking to detach from the San Diego County Water Authority through a process administered by the San Diego Local Agency Formation Commission, or LAFCO. That effort is the first of its kind in California, and it would effectively shift costs from Fallbrook and Rainbow to residents and businesses in the rest of the Water Authority’s service area.

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-- Mel Katz, Chair

Water Authority Board of Directors

“Because detachment would immediately raise the price of water for retail member agencies across San Diego County, it’s critical that every voter have the chance to weigh in,” said Mel Katz, chair of the Water Authority’s Board of Directors. “This is a simple matter of equity that follows the same principles LAFCO uses in similar situations to avoid disenfranchisement of voters.”

The LAFCO Commission is expected to consider detachment proposals by the Fallbrook Public Utility District and the Rainbow Municipal Water District on June 5. If detachment is approved, under the existing statute it would need to be approved in a public vote in only Fallbrook and Rainbow’s service areas. The Water Authority has maintained from the start that all voters in its service area would be impacted and therefore should also have the right to vote, which is what the proposed legislation would require. Fallbrook and Rainbow have opposed a countywide vote.

The detachment proposals are widely opposed by cities, labor leaders, taxpayer advocates, water agencies and others because of the unfair impacts and precedents set by the cost-shift proposal. The Water Authority’s Board of Directors opposes the proposals because they don’t meet the Board-established four-part test of protecting the ratepayers of Fallbrook and Rainbow; avoiding negative impacts for other member agencies; protecting the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay-Delta; and maintaining the Water Authority’s voting rights at MWD.

More information about detachment is at www.sdcwa.org/member-agencies/lafco-reorganization/.

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The San Diego County Water Authority sustains a \$268 billion regional economy and the quality of life for 3.3 million residents through a multi-decade water supply diversification plan, major infrastructure investments and forward-thinking policies that promote fiscal and environmental responsibility. A public agency created in 1944, the Water Authority delivers wholesale water supplies to 24 retail water providers, including cities, special districts and a military base.

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