

From: [Marcy Winograd](#)
To: [Office of the General Manager](#); [Environmental Planning Team - EPT](#)
Subject: My public comment opposing a water rate hike during the middle of this pandemic.
Date: Tuesday, April 14, 2020 1:42:15 PM

Dear MWD:

My name is Marcy Winograd and, though i was unable to participate in on-line public comment testimony earlier today, I wanted to submit my comments urging the District not to increase water rates during this pandemic.

While I understand the District may be reeling from decreased revenue, now is not the time to endanger public health with a water rate hike that threatens to adversely impact much of LA County during the middle of a life-threatening health crisis. If people are worried about the rising cost of water use, they are less likely to do what the CDC is recommending we all do-- wash our hands, 20 seconds each wash, repeatedly throughout the day.

I urge a moratorium on rate hikes during this pandemic, which could last for 18 months.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Marcy Winograd
Santa Monica
424-443-9338
winogradteach@gmail.com



CALIFORNIA WATER SERVICE

2632 West 237th Street, Torrance, CA 90505
Tel: (310) 257-1400

May 11, 2020

The Honorable Board Officers
The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
P.O. Box 54153
Los Angeles, CA 90054

Re: Budget and Rates in Relation to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Dear Chair Gray and Board Officers,

These are extraordinary times for California and the nation. We here at California Water Service (Cal Water) hope this communication finds you all safe and well.

Given the critically important role all of us in the water industry play in keeping our communities safe and healthy and the fact that we are an MWD customer, we are keenly interested in the Board's discussion about its budget and rates in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. We thought it appropriate to provide some information about Cal Water and our perspective on these important topics.

As you know, Cal Water is one of the state's largest water utilities. Today, we service approximately two million Californians, from Chico in the north to the Palos Verdes Peninsula in the south. Locally, we serve about 525,000 residents in communities such as Carson, Commerce, Hawthorne, Hermosa Beach, Montebello, Monterey Park, Redondo Beach, the Palos Verdes Peninsula, Thousand Oaks, Vernon, and Westlake Village.

We are regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission (Commission), an independent state agency. What this means is Cal Water does not set its own rates. Every three years we submit an Infrastructure Improvement Plan to the Commission, detailing all of our infrastructure and maintenance needs, as well as our operating costs related to personnel, water treatment, electricity, etc. It is a detailed and exhaustive process. Another independent state agency, the California Public Advocates Office (Cal PA), also is involved. Its mandated duty is to achieve the lowest possible cost of service that is consistent with safety and reliability, and Cal PA challenges and vets every element of our Infrastructure Improvement Plan. Others become party to the process as well – cities, counties, customers. It is a lengthy and thorough process. In the end, all parties want the same thing: safe, reliable water service at the lowest cost.

We go through this 18-month process every three years, a continuing cycle to ensure that the cost of service is current and true, and that all infrastructure maintenance and improvements, as well as all other expenses, are prudent and necessary.

It is also important to note that we do not, and cannot, mark up the cost of water. Purchased water is always a direct dollar-to-dollar pass-through cost. If MWD charges Cal Water \$1 for water, that \$1 gets incorporated in customer bills and no more.

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CALIFORNIA WATER SERVICE

We thought you might want to know what Cal Water is doing to help our customers during the current public emergency. This crisis has been frightening and tragic, and the economic consequences have been dire to so many of our customers.

- Cal Water stopped suspension of service for non-payment and reconnected delinquent accounts. We did so in early March of our own volition, prior to any local, state, or federal request or order.
- Cal Water has a hardship grant program for customers struggling through financial hardships, a program we have had in place since 2014.
- Cal Water has a Low-Income Ratepayer Assistance program for residential customers, and we offer similar assistance for agricultural, migrant, and non-profit group living facilities. Again, this is something we have had in place since long before the current crisis.
- Cal Water has expanded its assistance programs for small business customers, including those that have had to involuntarily close and are not using any water. There are now a number of penalty- and interest-free options that can be used to support local businesses.
- Although we had to close our lobbies to walk-in traffic due to social-distancing requirements, Cal Water has kept its local customer service centers operational to provide assistance to all of those facing hardships.
- Cal Water has implemented new practices to avoid temporary interruption of service while continuing critical infrastructure projects.

Given the fact that MWD rate increases directly impact water users, we ask that you seriously consider helping those impacted by the pandemic by freezing rates through the end of 2020 and reconsidering increases that have been approved since the onset of the pandemic.

We look forward to working with you on this vitally important topic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Jenkins".

Ken Jenkins
Director of Water Resource Sustainability

Cc: Mr. Jeffrey Kightlinger, General Manager





THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Office of the Board of Directors

May 26, 2020

Ken Jenkins
Director of Water Resource Sustainability
California Water Service
2632 West 237th Street
Torrance, CA 90505

Dear Mr. Jenkins:

Thank you for your letter dated May 11, 2020. We appreciate the input from California Water Service (Cal Water) on Metropolitan's budget and rate setting in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. Chairwoman Gray has asked me to respond to your letter for Metropolitan.

As you note, it is clear that the damage from the COVID-19 pandemic crisis will be significant and far reaching. At this time, we do not know the full extent of this crisis on our region and what state and federal relief will become available. We need to be responsive to the needs of our region and our communities in this time of crisis while also ensuring that Metropolitan remains prepared to fulfill its mission of supplying Southern California with reliable, clean and healthy water.

I appreciate the actions taken by Cal Water in response to this emergency. As you can imagine, Metropolitan has taken many of the same or similar steps. For instance, Metropolitan has:

- Suspended all sponsored inspections trips and tours of Metropolitan water facilities indefinitely;
- Halted all non-essential travel for staff and Board members indefinitely;
- Deferred replacing operating equipment to prioritize expenditures for critically needed equipment;
- Limited replacement hiring for departed staff to essential personnel;
- Reviewed our Capital Improvement Program for projects that can safely and responsibly be deferred; and
- Targeted a review, with our member agencies, of how the pandemic has impacted industry operations and retail agency financial conditions to identify actions Metropolitan can take to provide assistance.

Mr. Ken Jenkins

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May 26, 2020

I look forward to working with Cal Water and the Metropolitan Board members and member agencies representing cities that Cal Water serves to address these difficult issues. Thank you again for your input. Feel free to call me at 213-217-6211 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey Kightlinger". The signature is stylized and overlaps with the printed name below it.

Jeffrey Kightlinger
General Manager

cc: Chairwoman Gloria Gray, Metropolitan Water District
Metropolitan Water District Board of Directors