



For Immediate Release
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BASTA Demands Transparency and Accountability from Central Basin Water District & Local Water Pumpers

Rate increases are called into question as convoluted and insular water system seems more geared toward rewarding political allies with contracts than keeping rates in check.

The leadership of the Southeast Los Angeles community advocacy organization BASTA is demanding true transparency and accountability from both the Central Water Basin Board of Directors and the pumpers that bill southeast residents monthly. Further we demand that the water companies in the area abandon any plans to further increase rates until audits are conducted and real reforms are implemented.

“Residents of the southeast Los Angeles region are among the premier stewards and conservationists of water in our state. Yet, in spite of that fact, southeast residents are charged some of the highest rates for cubic feet of water in the southland. And now companies are proposing another rate increase, even though they have higher rates than other companies in the area and they just increased their rates this year. That’s just wrong,” said BASTA representative Denise Rodarte.

Residential water rates are set in a two-tier process: firstly by the Board of Directors of the Central Basin and secondly by individual pumpers who buy the water from the Central Basin. The Central Basin buys water from the Metropolitan Water District (MWD).

“The problem is twofold,” says BASTA spokesperson Cristina Garcia, “the Central Basin is buying water from the MWD and then marking up the rates. Moreover, the Central Basin say it’s for conservation programs or for other efforts that bring benefits to the residents in terms of practical water system improvements, but we have yet to see any evidence that the increases are for anything other than providing contracts for political allies. Plus, some would say it is another way to tax consumers without getting their permission for increased taxes.”

Garcia continues, “Then the pumpers are getting away with murder. In some cities in region 2, the water rates for neighbors just across the street from each other can vary as much as \$2 per cubic foot. That makes no sense.”

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Garcia says the first step to resolving the problem is bringing in State Controller John Chiang to conduct a thorough audit of the Central Basin's fiscal activities.

BASTA's demands include:

- The California Public Utilities Commission to deny any applications by any water pumpers for increased rates until the audit is complete
- A forensic audit of the Central Basin Water District including all vendors and public relations contracts
- The creation of a joint power authority made up of representatives from the cities of region two of the Central Water Basin (Bell, Bell Gardens, Artesia, Carson, Cerritos, Commerce, Compton, Cudahy, Culver City, Downey, Hawaiian Gardens, Hawthorne, Huntington Park, Lakewood, La Mirada, Lawndale, Lynwood, Maywood, Norwalk, Paramount, Santa Fe Springs, South Gate and all unincorporated areas of LA County in Region 2)

The JPA will set uniform rates among different pumpers within the region to stabilize water rates for users to spread rate increases fairly across the region

- Justify all so-called water conservation programs by providing an itemized cost ratio analysis
- Public Hearing on this matter in all the affected cities of region 2
- A pledge by all local council members and mayors in Region 2 to support these demands and put pressure on our state elected officials to support an audit by State Controller of the Central Basin and work on legislation that ensure fair and uniform rates within our communities

BASTA leadership will forward a letter to Controller Chiang and all local elected officials this week. "These rates are out of control and people just can't afford to be nickel and dimed to death anymore. Controller Chiang delivered for us in Bell and we hope that pro-active leadership will continue for southeast residents." concluded Garcia.

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