

WEST BASIN MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE ALERT: SB 701

OVERVIEW: Introduced by Senator Ron Calderon (Montebello), Senate Bill 701 would require Central Basin Municipal Water District (CBMWD) to submit an annual report to the Legislature on the status of the Central Groundwater Basin and associated seawater barrier operations beginning in 2012 and continuing through 2016. The required report is to include a review of all actions by the Department of Water Resources and the Water Replenishment District of Southern California (WRD).

West Basin MWD OPPOSES SB 701

This bill is part of an ongoing effort by CBMWD to challenge the authority of, and decision making, by the Water Replenishment District regarding groundwater supplies in the Central Groundwater Basin. This effort has included numerous lawsuits, duplicated efforts regarding the development of groundwater storage plans and now unnecessary legislation.

West Basin opposes SB 701 for the following reasons:

Improperly Asserts Authority and Responsibility. SB 701 asserts that CBMWD holds “primary oversight responsibility with respect to protecting the public’s interest in the Central Groundwater Basin.” This assertion is unsubstantiated by the Municipal Water District Act and such responsibility is not defined in statute or in SB 701. This bill would expand the rights provided to a California municipal water district by providing new authority without limitations.

Creates Redundancy and Overlapping Authority. SB 701 would cause the duplication of services by CBMWD, WRD and DWR. This will result in increased costs to each agency and result in higher rates for customers, and pumpers in both the Central and West Coast Groundwater Basins. This sets a dangerous policy for every California groundwater basin with overlapping municipal water districts.

Shifts Responsibility to an Agency Lacking Necessary Expertise. WRD was formed in 1959, under the Water Replenishment District Act, for the purpose of protecting and replenishing the groundwater supplies in the Central and West Coast Groundwater Basins. With more than 50 years of monitoring and managing these groundwater supplies, WRD has developed a unique expertise related to the region’s groundwater supplies and has a proven and established history of sound groundwater management. SB 701, and the related effort, would create a shift in responsibility over groundwater supplies to CBMWD, a California imported and surface water wholesaler, with no expertise or mandate to independently document and report on the groundwater conditions in the Central Groundwater Basin.

Untimely Self Imposed State Mandate. In the 2011 legislative session, the California Legislature will be working to solve a \$26.6 billion budget deficit, requiring difficult cuts and possibly new revenues. This is not the time for additional state mandates on local government. As sponsored by CBMWD, this bill includes a self imposed unfunded state mandate which would have significant cost implications on CBMWD, WRD and DWR.