

TO FIX OUR WATER CRISIS FIX CALIFORNIA'S CONSTITUTION

The current drought has harmed California's economy, environment, and communities, and has exposed serious long-term water management challenges. There is an urgent need to reform California's outdated water management structure to support a more modern and sustainable water system. We've waited too long already. **Now is the time to act.**

To protect our communities and to ensure a healthy and reliable water future, local governments need the ability to advance common-sense policies that promote water conservation, manage polluted runoff, and treat low-income rate-payers fairly.



THE CHALLENGE

Communities need better tools to conserve, reuse, and recycle water. Our current laws create a costly burden for local governments. Meanwhile, the lack of funding for essential water services continues to grow, as shown in a recent Public Policy Institute of California report that identified a \$2-3 billion annual funding deficit for critical water services in California.¹

We are seeking a state constitutional amendment that would empower local communities to modernize water management and improve public health, water reliability, environmental protection, and economic stability.

ABOUT THE CALIFORNIA WATER PARTNERSHIP

The California Water Partnership is dedicated to securing a sustainable and equitable water future for California. Our partnership advocates for adoption and implementation of the principles and practices of integrated water management. Our work ensures that water management practices benefit our public health, our environment and all Californians.

A CALL TO ACTION

The California Water Partnership supports a constitutional amendment to allow local governments to improve our state's water management in three key areas:



URBAN RUNOFF AS A RESOURCE



WATER AFFORDABILITY



CONSERVATION PRICING

CALIFORNIA
COASTKEEPER.
ALLIANCE





CLEAN AND REUSE URBAN RUNOFF

Urban runoff is the biggest threat to California's watersheds and coastal environment. A single storm can create billions of gallons of polluted runoff across the state. Other urban runoff from industrial flows, water leaks, car or street washing, and overwatered landscapes contributes to this problem. For example, each day roughly 10 million gallons of water flow from the urban Los Angeles County area out to sea - wasted, even as we desperately need water. Communities could capture, clean, and reuse this wasted runoff to benefit the local environment and bolster local water supplies. By capturing runoff in Southern California and the San Francisco Bay area, for example, we could increase our water supply equivalent to the annual water use of the entire City of Los Angeles.²

Properly managing runoff and water supply is a critical responsibility of local government, but the state constitution currently puts additional burdens on this responsibility, preventing local governments from managing runoff in the same way as utilities like water, electricity, and garbage collection. A constitutional amendment would empower municipalities to manage water more holistically, resulting in improved water reliability, public health and environmental protection. Without this change, local governments' ability to finance important water projects is in jeopardy. Local governments must also modernize their water management practices and exhibit transparency and accountability to ratepayers.



ENSURE AFFORDABLE WATER FOR ALL CALIFORNIANS

California has a Human Right to Water law, but our current water management system leaves rate structures that subsidize low-income ratepayers (including "lifeline" rate programs to ensure users can afford a basic amount) vulnerable to legal challenges.

Prices go up, but low-income residents and senior citizens on fixed incomes are unable to pay high water rates, and water agencies are currently hindered from helping these vulnerable Californians.

Meanwhile, much of California's water infrastructure is beyond its useful life, and demand for water drastically exceeds supply due to drought and outdated water management.

To establish true water affordability, we need a constitutional amendment to allow water agencies to voluntarily set rate structures that provide low-income ratepayer programs and/or "lifeline rates" to qualified customers.

● **Human Right to Water** became law in California January 2013 and states that every human being has the right to safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water adequate for human consumption, cooking, and sanitary purposes. *California's constitution currently presents an obstacle to achieving this goal.*



SET WATER PRICING TO PROMOTE CONSERVATION

California water agencies need the ability to set water pricing that promotes conservation, discourages excessive or wasteful use, and meets revenue needs for maintenance and improvements. Unfortunately, the state constitution currently contains barriers for local governments to incentivize water conservation and penalize residents and businesses that waste water. Tiered water pricing structures — common throughout the country — are designed to promote fair pricing and water conservation by charging higher rates to high volume customers and lower rates to those using water more modestly. Recently, several municipal water agencies with

tiered rates were sued on the grounds that their rate structure did not reflect the precise costs of providing water service. This needs to change.

Well-designed water pricing will protect low-income, low-volume users and ensure those who use the most water are paying their fair share of the long-term infrastructure costs. To better address our state's current drought and the future water challenges to come, we need a constitutional amendment to allow water agencies to effectively and fairly set water conservation pricing.

¹ http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_314EHR.pdf

² <http://www.nrdc.org/water/files/ca-water-supply-solutions-stormwater-IB.pdf>

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