

LEGISLATIVE POLICY PLATFORM AND PRINCIPLES

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

The purpose of the Legislative Policy Platform and Principles (Platform) is to guide Western Municipal Water District's (Western Water) overall legislative program and provide a foundation for all legislative actions taken on behalf of Western. The Platform provides a broad understanding of how Western Water responds to legislation and what ongoing principles are most important to Western Water when developing legislative priorities. The Platform is intended to be a document that is reviewed and adjusted as needed.

The Platform is important to both Western Water's wholesale and retail customers because Western Water's legislative and regulatory activities are taken on behalf of all customers within Western Water's service area. Western Water is hard at work ensuring the voices of all customers are being heard as the state and federal governments continue to develop policies that directly impact our region.

BACKGROUND

California's water system is both highly interconnected and decentralized, which creates unprecedented challenges that require multi-faceted and complex solutions. Some of these challenges include:

- Water supply diversification
- Emerging water quality concerns
- Upgrading and adding new infrastructure
- Funding and financing of projects
- Environmental impacts

Prioritizing long-term efficiency and resource planning, diversification of Western Water's water supply, and innovation of our facilities are all necessary to offset the negative effects brought by climate change.



Western Water understands that there is no “silver bullet” solution to the complicated sets of issues water agencies face. Western Water supports policy solutions that advance sustainable, comprehensive, cohesive, and science-based approaches to providing water and wastewater services. Moreover, holistic policy solutions that do not create unintended consequences in other areas of the state are a priority for Western Water.

WESTERN WATER’S APPROACH TO LOCAL CONTROL

Western Water fundamentally supports the preservation of local government control and decision-making, except to the extent that state and federal law provides for oversight by regulatory agencies.

Each water agency is unique in its geography, customer demographics, resource mix, and political drivers; therefore, Western Water believes that the local, elected governing body is best situated to determine locally appropriate strategies to reach legislative or regulatory mandates and goals.

When mandates are necessary, Western Water supports a less prescriptive approach that includes clear funding mechanisms. And when establishing statewide goals, Western Water supports allowing public agencies the needed flexibility to meet those mandates in regionally and locally responsive ways, including but not limited to considering local needs, existing resources, and politics.

Ultimately, rate stability, community involvement, public accountability, local decision-making, and personal customer service are some of the important benefits of local governance.

In considering the increasingly prescriptive legislative and regulatory actions and mandates, Western Water will uphold the autonomy of special districts and other local public agencies to operate independently, to the greatest extent possible within the law, to protect the interests of the customers, ratepayers, member wholesale agencies, and Western Water.

This set of Legislative Platform and Principles, along with the Legislative Priorities (Priorities), upon review and approval of the Board of Directors, serve as a basis for positions and actions undertaken on behalf of Western Water on legislation and regulatory proposals.

LEGISLATIVE POLICY PLATFORM

This Platform supports Western Water’s mission and focuses on providing the highest quality, reliable water and wastewater services for customers. By adopting the platform and supporting policy principles, Western Water’s Board of Directors (Board) sets a clear direction for staff to adopt official district positions on clearly stated legislative issues at the start of the legislative session and throughout the year. By doing this, the legislative approval process is streamlined by receiving clear direction at the beginning of the legislative session from the Board on pertinent legislative issues.

On both federal and state levels, Western Water may support legislative proposals, policies, and regulatory actions that are consistent with the Platform. Western Water may oppose those legislative proposals, policies, and regulatory actions that are inconsistent with Platform. In cases where a legislative proposal, policy, or regulatory action is not a priority for Western Water but may affect the water industry, Western Water may choose to take a “watch” position.

For proposed legislation, either consistent with Western Water’s Legislative Platform, Priorities, or consistent with legislative positions Western Water has taken in the past, Western Water staff shall be authorized to prepare position letters for the General Manager’s signature. Items not addressed in the Platform or Priorities may require further Board direction.

Any legislative positions and/or actions that are deemed as potentially “controversial” by the General Manager will be presented to the Board for further action. Generally, Western Water will not address matters that are not pertinent to Western Water’s services, such as social or international issues.

Other Western Water departments are encouraged to monitor and be knowledgeable of any legislative issues related to their areas. However, any requests for Western Water to take positions on a legislative or regulatory matter must be directed to the Communications and Customer Experience Department. Western Water staff may not take positions on legislative or regulatory issues without the review of the Government Relations Officer and the approval of the Assistant General Manager for Communications and Customer Experience.

LEGISLATIVE POLICY PRINCIPLES

To most effectively and efficiently accomplish Western Water's core mission of delivering wholesale and retail water and wastewater services to our customers, consistent with Board direction and the adopted plans, the Government Relations Division within the Communications and Customer Experience Department uses the following eight legislative principles and the related priorities as a basis for taking positions on legislation.

PRINCIPLE OF WATER SUPPLY RELIABILITY

- Support long-term, statewide planning that will result in significant investments made in water infrastructure and will increase both that State's overall water supply and reliability.
- Support the development of the Delta Conveyance Project, which benefits both the environment and the 27 million people who rely on it as a primary source for water.
- Support measures to expand both surface and groundwater storage.

PRINCIPLE OF LOCAL RESOURCE AND SUPPLY DEVELOPMENT

- Support expanded options for local water supply development.
- Support streamlining of federal and state regulatory and reporting mandates for local water supply projects.
- Support legislation that minimizes cost impacts of new or expanded regulations.

PRINCIPLE OF WATER QUALITY

- Support science-based approaches to regulating constituents of emerging concern, including per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).
- Support actions to safely expand both direct and indirect potable reuse opportunities.
- Oppose measures to legislate new water quality standards instead of going through the regulatory process.

PRINCIPLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

- Support measures that credit water agencies for the positive contributions in climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Support modernization of the Endangered Species Act that allows for the best available science, adaptive management, and flexible implementation to be used.
- Support attempts at making the California Environmental Quality Act more effective and efficient in its implementation.

PRINCIPLE OF WATER-ENERGY NEXUS

- Support measures to increase the reliability, availability, and affordability of green energy sources that meet California's 2045 clean energy goals.
- Support funding and flexibility for public utilities to meet the 2035 California Air Resources Board's zero-emission vehicle mandates.
- Support expanded definitions of renewable resources.

PRINCIPLE OF HUMAN RESOURCES

- Support measures that reform the pension system and help local governments with their unfunded liability.
- Support measures that promote efforts to advance workplace diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Support funding for apprenticeships and education programs dedicated to water and wastewater careers.

PRINCIPLE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- Support legislation that allows for greater access of public meetings without overburdening local agencies.
- Support efforts to modernize, streamline, and create efficiencies to public records request process.
- Support funding for public agencies to modernize their information systems to more easily adapt to a hybrid model public meetings.

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