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Nobody wants to pay more for water, but it's unavoidable

If we took a poll and asked residents, "Are you happy that the cost of water is going up in Thousand Oaks?" we're sure that nobody would say yes.

Nobody wants to pay more for a necessity.

The cost of water is going up for Californians *everywhere* , and the proposed increases in T.O. *are* steep. We're reasonably sure, though, that major daily newspapers and other news gathering organizations would have told us if the water rate hikes were a conspiracy.

Maybe it's time for a reality check.

We live in an arid area. For all intents and purposes, Southern California is a desert. Virtually all of our water is imported from somewhere else. For us, it's through the State Water Project. Much of it was probably snow in the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

We're having a drought. It began three years ago. You'd have to be illiterate, blind or from Mars not to know about it.

Almost two-thirds of California gets 20 inches or less of rain in a *normal* year. The U.S. Department of Agriculture declared a drought-related disaster in 13 California counties in May 2007. To our knowledge, none of parched areas in Northern California are now floating in water.

Water reserves in California have shrunk for three consecutive years. The infrastructure to bring water here constantly needs maintenance and repair. Agriculture, recreation and wildlife also require water.

We can also give the *Orange County Register* credit for this little tidbit: Southern California's major water wholesaler, Metropolitan Water District, is considering an increase in its pension plan.

Under the old plan, a retiree after 25 years with MWD would get 50 percent of his base pay. That same retiree would get 62.5 percent of his base pay under the new plan. Just like government agencies, MWD pensioners will be protected— even if their private plans tank in the stock market.

This is grossly unfair when you remember that consumers are expected to use *less* water while paying *more* .

Ventura County School District Consolidation

The Ventura County Grand Jury recently recommended a consolidation of several of the county's school districts to save taxpayer dollars. School superintendents are opposed. How do you feel about this hot button issue in your community?

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