NORTH COUNTY TIMES | THE CALIFORNIAN

EDITORIAL: Time to enter pension fray

OUR VIEW: Urge water agencies to join hike fight

the North County Times Opinion staff -- opinion@nctimes.com | Posted: Sunday, September 20, 2009 12:00 am

David is winding up, taking aim at Goliath.

And all North County residents have an opportunity to join the fight ---- especially if they are at all concerned, as they should be, with stopping an ill-advised increase in future retirement benefits for another group of governmental employees.

Olivenhain Municipal Water District's board stepped into David's sandals earlier this month when it voted to oppose a tentative 25 percent increase in future pension benefits for employees of Southern California's primary water distributor ---- Metropolitan Water District, our Goliath.

Midweek, the Olivenhain district challenged other area water entities to join it and sign a letter of opposition to the pension increase to be presented Thursday to the San Diego County Water Authority's four members of Metropolitan's board.

As we noted in this spot Sept. 13 and again Wednesday, we've many objections to increasing public employee pension benefits at a time most entities are finding it difficult to fund existing benefits packages and are wisely seeking to curb them in the future.

Metropolitan had planned to get the increase approved by its board last week as part of a five-year contract with its four employee unions. Fortunately, prior to the meeting public outcry over the pension increase was such that the issue was postponed. A workshop on the topic is being scheduled for no earlier than Oct. 12.

Our region's water distribution system is convoluted, to say the least. In short, water and all the costs associated with its purchase, debt and operational obligations flows through Metropolitan to its member-agencies to their members down to anyone who pays a water bill.

This battle needs to go the other way as the strongest show of force is built from the bottom up.

So contact your water supplier (or one of your agency's board members) and demand support of Olivenhain's efforts.

In addition, join us in urging the County Water Authority board to take a united stance Thursday and oppose Metropolitan's plan.

Contact area water agencies

List of regional water providers: http://www.sdcwa.org/about/member-agencies.phtml#contact

San Diego County Water Authority: http://www.sdcwa.org 858-522-6600

Metropolitan Water District board: http://www.mwdh2o.org/mwdh2o/pages/board/bio01.html 213-217-6000

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