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### **My Turn: Losing Local Control**

You may have heard by now that the State has approved legislation that mandates permanent statewide conservation of water. This is another successful effort by state government to wrest control of precious water resources from local water districts. The loss of local control is a loss of cost containment, a loss of personal freedom, and a reduction in quality of life.

In 2017, the Governor lifted his drought declaration, but left in place several onerous permanent water conservation regulations. Today, California is facing several intrusive indoor and outdoor water budgets. Water districts will be forced to carry out these legislative mandates, including taxes, fees, and fines.

Apparently, someone determined that by the year 2030, each of us will need only 50 gallons of water per day for our individual well-being, health and safety. Outdoor landscape on parcels will be photographed by satellites and assessed to determine what is irrigated, irrigable, or not irrigable. Parcel data developed from these images will be given to local water districts to validate their water budget allowance.

Coupled with other factors, data will be collected and calculations will be pushed out to determine a district-wide water budget. Water districts will have some latitude to make certain adjustments to make the regulations work. However, the water district will be responsible to implement, report annually to the State, and later be held accountable if compliance measures are not met. Non-compliance in 2027 can result in fines to the water district of \$1,000 per day.

Imposition of this “water budget” conservation mandate in the rural mountain communities”, permanent or otherwise, will damage the quality of life and rob the environment and wildlife of water classified as “urban”. The State has failed to recognize and acknowledge that all of the water in this region, both indoors and outdoors, not used by people or for the environmental needs of wildlife, landscape, and soil, moves down into the streams and creeks, providing beneficial use of water to the valley floor, while replenishing depleted ground water aquifers.

These conservation regulations, while reducing water usage, will rob revenue from the district’s water operating system, and will result in higher rates and/or reduced services. Higher rates to off-set revenue loss conflicts with current State goals to keep water affordable.

Higher rates may also result in the loss of agriculture, and tourism revenue, resulting in a direct hit to the local economies.

Permanent conservation also creates what is commonly referred to as “hardened demand”. What happens the next time a drought occurs and you are asked to conserve even more?

Unfortunately, the legislature is misguided to think that the State is better equipped and positioned to operate a local community water system rather than local water districts in this region. This state position is inaccurate and should be intolerable to the water ratepayers in this region.

Next on the States agenda, a proposed “Water Tax!”