

AWA DIRECTORS SUPPORT PROPOSED STATE-FUNDED WATER RATE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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(Sutter Creek) The Amador Water Agency Board of Directors recently voted to support a proposed state Water Rate Assistance Program (WRAP) to provide water affordability assistance for both drinking water and wastewater services to low-income ratepayers, a bill currently under review in the California Assembly Committee on Appropriations.

During discussion at the August 12, 2021, regular AWA Board of Directors' meeting, Board President Susan Peters said, "While the Agency needs to increase rates to address the Agency's aging and inadequate infrastructure, we also take seriously the comments made during our rate hearing about the impact on low income customers."

Since California's constitution prevents AWA (and other public utilities) from subsidizing some customers with rate monies paid by other customers, the Agency is supporting SB 222, which would create the proposed WRAP program to help low income water and wastewater customers pay their utility bills.

According to the bill's author, CA Senator Bill Dodd (Vacaville), "SB 222 would establish a long-needed framework for a statewide water affordability assistance program. The pandemic has dramatically increased attention to this lack of a statewide water affordability program and the real urgency to address it ... The need for water affordability assistance will not magically disappear — it has been a major challenge and gap in our utility safety net for decades, and water affordability challenges will only continue to increase due to the rising cost of water."

The bill, if signed into law, would require the program to be operating by January 1, 2023, and to set aside at least \$100 million annually (Water Rate Assistance Fund), to provide funding for ratepayer assistance using state income tax and a bottled water tax.

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