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**AB-399 Water Ratepayers Protections Act of 2023: County Water Authority Act: exclusion of territory: procedure.** (2023-2024)

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**Assembly Bill No. 399**

**CHAPTER 802**

An act to amend Section 11 of the County Water Authority Act (Chapter 545 of the Statutes of 1943), relating to water.

[ Approved by Governor October 13, 2023. Filed with Secretary of State October 13, 2023. ]

**LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

AB 399, Boerner. Water Ratepayers Protections Act of 2023: County Water Authority Act: exclusion of territory: procedure.

The County Water Authority Act provides for the formation of county water authorities and grants to those authorities specified powers with regards to providing water service. The act provides 2 methods of excluding territory from any county water authority, one of which is that a public agency whose corporate area as a unit is part of a county water authority may obtain exclusion of the area by submitting to the electors within the public agency, at any general or special election, the proposition of excluding the public agency's corporate area from the county water authority. Existing law requires that, if a majority of the electors approve the proposition, specified actions take place to implement the exclusion.

This bill, the Water Ratepayers Protections Act of 2023, would additionally require the public entity to submit the proposition of excluding the public agency's corporate area from the county water authority to the electors within the territory of the county water authority. The bill would require the 2 elections to be separate; however, the bill would authorize both elections to run concurrently. The bill would require the ballot materials to include a fiscal impact statement, as described. The bill would also require the ballot materials for the election encompassing the territory of the county water authority to include a statement describing the annual aggregated fiscal impact to remaining members of the county water authority as a result of the reorganization. The bill would require the county water authority to prepare that statement. By imposing a higher level of service on a local agency, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program. The bill would require a majority vote for withdrawal in both elections for the withdrawal of the public agency from the territory of the county water authority.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to the statutory provisions noted above.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: yes

**THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:**

**SECTION 1.** This act shall be known, and may be cited, as the Water Ratepayers Protections Act of 2023.

**SEC. 2.** Section 11 of the County Water Authority Act (Chapter 545 of the Statutes of 1943), as amended by Section 3 of Chapter 1408 of the Statutes of 1985, is amended to read:

**Sec.11.** (a) Exclusion of territory from any county water authority may be effected by either of the following methods:

(1) Territory excluded from the portion of the corporate area of any public agency that lies within the exterior boundaries of a county water authority, the public agency being a unit of the authority, and that exclusion occurs in accordance with the provisions of law applicable to those exclusions, shall thereby be excluded from and shall no longer be a part of the authority; provided, that the taxable property within the excluded territory shall continue to be taxable by the county water authority for the purpose of paying the bonded or other indebtedness outstanding or contracted for at the time of the exclusion and until the bonded or other indebtedness has been satisfied; provided further, that if the taxable property within the excluded territory or any part thereof shall be, at the time of the exclusion, subject to special taxes levied, or to be levied, by the county water authority pursuant to terms and conditions previously fixed under subdivision (c) or (d) of Section 10 for the annexation of the excluded territory or part thereof to the county water authority, the taxable property within the excluded territory or part thereof so subject to those special taxes shall continue to be taxable by the county water authority for the purpose of raising the aggregate sums to be raised by the levy of special taxes upon taxable property within the respective annexing areas pursuant to terms and conditions for the annexation or annexations as so fixed and until the aggregate sums have been so raised by the special tax levies.

Exclusion of territory from a county water authority pursuant to this paragraph shall not occur if two or more public agencies that are included in a county water authority as separate units are subject to a reorganization of their boundaries under applicable provisions of law that would result in an exchange or transfer, but not an overlapping, of territory that is entirely within the county water authority. The boundaries of those agencies within the county water authority, upon that reorganization and the filing with the secretary of the county water authority of a copy of the certificate of completion prepared, executed, and filed by the executive officer of the local agency formation commission responsible therefore constitute the boundaries of the agencies for all purposes of the county water authority, without action by the board of directors of the county water authority. If the exchange includes territory subject to special conditions and tax levies pursuant to the terms of annexation at the time the territory became a part of the county water authority, the territory shall continue to be subject to those conditions and to be taxable by the county water authority or those levies.

From and after the effective date of the inclusion of the territory by the including public agency, the territory shall be considered to be a part of the corporate area of the including agency; provided, however, that, if the taxable property within the territory, or any portion thereof, is subject to special taxes levied or to be levied by the county water authority pursuant to terms and conditions previously fixed under subdivision (c) or (d) of Section 10 for the annexation of the territory or portion thereof to the county water authority, then the taxable property within the territory shall continue to be taxable by the county water authority for the purpose of raising the aggregate sums to be raised by the levy of the special taxes pursuant to the terms and conditions for the annexation or annexations as so fixed and until the aggregate sums have been so raised by the special tax levy.

(2) Any public agency whose corporate area as a unit has become or is a part of any county water authority may obtain the exclusion of the area therefrom by elections conducted in the following manner:

(A) (i) (I) The governing body of any public agency may submit to the electors thereof at any general or special election the proposition of excluding from the county water authority the corporate area of the public agency. Notice of the election shall be given in the manner provided in subdivision (c) of Section 10. The election shall be conducted and the returns thereof canvassed in the manner provided by law for the conduct of elections in the public agency. If a majority of electors voting thereon vote in favor of withdrawal, the result thereof shall be certified by the governing body of the public agency to the board of directors of the county water authority.

(II) The ballot materials submitted to the electors shall include a fiscal impact statement in the statement of the ordinance to be voted upon, which the public agency shall prepare. The fiscal impact statement shall include an estimate of the measure's impact on the public agency's water rates, any anticipated exit fees the member public agency expects to pay to the county water authority, and the amount and duration of any bonded and other indebtedness the public agency is required to pay pursuant to subparagraph (B).

(ii) (I) The governing body of any public agency may submit to the electors within the territory of the county water authority at any general or special election the proposition of excluding from the county water authority the corporate area of the public agency. Notice of the election shall be given in the manner provided in subdivision (c) of Section 10. The election shall be conducted and the returns thereof canvassed in the manner provided by law for the conduct of elections in the public agency. If a majority of electors within the territory of the county water authority voting thereon vote in favor of withdrawal, the result thereof shall be certified by the governing body of the public agency to the board of directors of the county water authority.

(II) The ballot materials submitted to the electors shall include both of the following:

(ia) The fiscal impact statement described in subclause (II) of clause (i).

(ib) A statement describing the annual aggregated fiscal impact to remaining members of the county water authority as a result of the reorganization. The county water authority shall prepare that statement.

(iii) The elections conducted pursuant to this subparagraph shall be separate elections; however, they may run concurrently with one another. A majority vote in both elections for withdrawal is necessary for the withdrawal of the public agency from the territory of the county water authority.

(iv) The requirement set forth in clause (ii) does not apply to a public agency that is a "federal military reservation" or "military reservation," as defined in Section 10.2, or a "military installation," as defined in Section 2801 of Title 10 of the United States Code.

(B) A certificate of the proceedings shall be made by the secretary of the county water authority and filed with the Secretary of State. Upon the filing of the certificate, the corporate area of the public agency shall be excluded from the county water authority and shall no longer be a part thereof; provided, that the taxable property within the excluded area shall continue to be taxable by the county water authority for the purpose of paying the bonded and other indebtedness of the county water authority outstanding or contracted for at the time of the exclusion and until the bonded or other indebtedness has been satisfied; provided further, that if the taxable property within the excluded area or any part thereof is, at the time of the exclusion, subject to special taxes levied or to be levied by the county water authority pursuant to the terms and conditions previously fixed under subdivision (c) or (d) of Section 10 for the annexation of the excluded area or part thereof to the county water authority, the taxable property within the excluded area or part thereof so subject to the special taxes shall continue to be taxable by the county water authority for the purpose of raising the aggregate sums to be raised by the levy of special taxes upon taxable property within the respective annexing areas pursuant to the terms and conditions for the annexation or annexations as so fixed and until the aggregate sums have been so raised by the special tax levies. Upon the filing of the certificate of proceedings, the Secretary of State shall, within 10 days, issue a certificate reciting the filing of the papers in the Secretary of State's office and the exclusion of the corporate area of the public agency from the county water authority. The Secretary of State shall transmit the original of the certificate to the secretary of the county water authority and shall forward a certified copy thereof to the county clerk of the county in which the county water authority is situated.

(b) Whenever territory is excluded from any public agency in accordance with paragraph (1) of subdivision (a), the governing body, or clerk thereof, of the public agency shall file with the board of directors of the county water authority a statement of the change of boundaries of the public agency, setting forth the legal description of the boundaries of the public agency, as so changed, and of the part thereof within the county water authority, which statement shall be accompanied by a map or plat indicating the boundaries.

(c) Whenever any territory has been excluded from any public agency prior to the effective date of this section, under conditions that would have resulted in the exclusion of the territory from a county water authority had paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) then been in effect, upon compliance with the following provisions of this paragraph, the territory shall be excluded from and shall no longer be a part of, the authority, the last-mentioned provisions being as follows:

(1) The governing body of the public agency may adopt an ordinance that, after reciting that the territory has been excluded from the public agency by proceedings previously taken under statutory authority, and after referring to the applicable statutes and to the date or dates upon which the exclusion became effective, shall describe the territory and shall determine and declare that the territory shall be, and thereby is, excluded from the county water authority.

(2) The governing body, or clerk thereof, of the public agency shall file a certified copy of the ordinance with the Secretary of State. Upon the filing of the certified copy of the ordinance in the office of the Secretary of State, the territory shall be excluded from, and shall no longer be a part of, the county water authority; provided, that the taxable property within the excluded territory shall continue to be taxable by the county water authority for the purpose of paying the bonded or other indebtedness outstanding or contracted for at the time of the exclusion, and until the bonded or other indebtedness has been satisfied; provided further, that if the taxable property within the excluded territory or any part thereof is, at the time of the exclusion, subject to special taxes levied or to be levied by the county water authority pursuant to terms and conditions previously fixed under subdivision (c) or (d) of Section 10 for the annexation of the excluded territory or part thereof to the county water authority, the taxable property within the excluded territory or part thereof so subject to the special taxes shall continue to be taxable by the county water authority for the purpose of raising the aggregate sums to be raised by the levy of special taxes upon taxable property within the respective annexing areas pursuant to the terms and conditions for the annexation or annexations as so fixed, and until the aggregate sums have been so raised by the special tax levies.

(3) Upon the filing of the certified copy of the ordinance, the Secretary of State shall, within 10 days issue a certificate describing the territory, reciting the filing of the certified copy of the ordinance and the exclusion of the territory from the county water authority, and declaring that the territory is no longer a part of the county water authority. The Secretary of State shall transmit the original of the certificate to the secretary of the county water authority and shall forward a certified copy of the certificate to the county clerk of the county in which the county water authority is situated.

(d) Whenever any territory has been exchanged or transferred pursuant to law prior to January 1, 1986, among two or more public agencies that are included in a county water authority as separate units, the territory shall not be deemed excluded from the county water authority, notwithstanding the failure of the county water authority to give its consent to the exchange or transfer of the territory, if there has been filed with the board of directors of the county water authority prior to January 1, 1986, a statement of the change of boundaries of the agencies, as so changed, and of the part within the county water authority, which statement shall be accompanied by a map or plat indicating those boundaries.

**SEC. 3.** If the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code.