

Measure U421

INSTRUCTIONS:

Please carefully read the following description of a ballot measure that was written by a disinterested expert. Feel free to take notes or outline passages as you read.

This should take you approximately 10 minutes.

BALLOT MEASURE U421

BACKGROUND

California is dependent on both surface water and groundwater to meet its water needs. Approximately 60 percent of the water used in California comes from surface sources such as rivers, lakes, and streams. The remaining 40 percent is pumped from wells in groundwater basins.

The natural distribution of surface water and groundwater varies greatly within the state. Approximately 70 percent of the state's average annual precipitation occurs in the northern third of the state. While groundwater occurs throughout the state, the major supplies are located in the Central Valley and in southern California. The location of major population centers and the location of areas of agricultural production do not generally coincide with the location of surface and groundwater supplies. Therefore, state, federal, and local water agencies have constructed facilities to transport water from areas where it is available to areas where there is an unmet need for water. Even so, some areas lack sufficient natural or imported water supplies to meet current demand and are pumping so much water from wells that some wells eventually may fail.

PROPOSAL

This measure contains several statements on water policy and four separate sections which propose to increase both the efficiency with which water is used and public control over water. These sections cover water conservation, protection of instream water uses, restrictions on storage of water at the New Melones Reservoir, and groundwater management.

- **Water Conservation.** This section requires certain entities to develop water conservation programs. Entities subject to this requirement are those that (a) supply or will supply directly, or through contracts with the state or federal government, more than 20,000 acre-feet of water per year and (b) are involved in the transfer of water from one basin to another. The required water conservation programs must be submitted to the State Water Resources Control Board by January 1, 1985. An entity affected by this section of the measure may not undertake a new or increased transfer of water between basins until the board determines that the entity's water conservation program is being implemented adequately.

The water conservation program must identify all reasonable alternatives to conserve water, such as waste water reclamation, interbasin and intrabasin transfers of developed water supplies, and changes in water pricing. The program also must include a comparison of costs and a plan for implementation of alternatives to new or increased interbasin transfers. Under the measure any alternative that would cost less than importation of additional water would cost must be implemented before any additional water may be imported.

Each agency involved in water conservation is granted the authority to use any of its existing financing powers to implement the water conservation program.

- ***Protection of Instream Uses.*** Under existing law the State Water Resources Control Board is responsible for approving applications to appropriate water from streams and lakes. These appropriations normally involve a diversion or other form of physical control of the water. When determining the amount of water that may be appropriated by the applicant, the board must consider the public interest in retaining sufficient flows to support recreation and fish and wildlife.

This section would authorize the board to approve an appropriation of water from a stream or lake solely for "reasonable and beneficial instream uses," such as aesthetic, scientific, scenic, and water quality uses, without diverting or physically controlling the streamflow. In addition, this section would require that, as a condition of approving any municipal, agricultural, or power project which would result in an adverse impact on instream uses, the board must require the appropriator to offset those adverse impacts. Finally, the measure permits the board to establish standards for instream low protection to implement its provisions.

- ***New Melones Reservoir.*** This section would restrict the amount of water that may be stored behind the Federal New Melones Dam on the Stanislaus River. With four specified exceptions, this section provided that no water may be stored at New Melones until the Federal Bureau of Reclamation has entered into long-term contracts to sell at least 75 percent of the water supply made available by the project.

The measure also seeks to revise the congressionally authorized pricing of water from the New Melones Project. The current practice of the Federal Bureau of Reclamation is to pool the costs and revenues of the water and power from New Melones with the costs and revenues from all other facilities of the Federal Central Valley Project (CVP). This section would prohibit those entities subject to state law from entering into a contract for purchase of water from New Melones unless the purchasers agree to pay their full share of (1) the construction costs of the New Melones Project, without benefit of subsidy from other CVP facilities or other water users, and (2) all operation, maintenance, and delivery costs involved in the New Melones Project and related conveyance facilities.

The measure would also require the State Water Resources Control Board, to the extent possible, to restrict storage of water in the New Melones Reservoir to the area downstream of Parrott's Ferry Bridge.

- **Groundwater Management.** This section would impose groundwater management on 11 groundwater basins where overpumping of water is critical: (a) Santa Cruz-Pajaro, (b) Cuyama Valley, (c) Ventura County, (d) Eastern San Joaquin, (e) Chowchilla, (f) Madera, (g) Kings, (h) Kaweah, (i) Tulare Lake, (j) Tule, and (k) Kern County. These areas are located primarily in the eastern and southern portions of the San Joaquin Valley.

Local entities in the specified areas would be required to establish local groundwater management authorities within one year of the passage of this measure. If any local entity subject to this requirement fails to establish a groundwater management authority within one year, the State Water Resources Control Board would be authorized to designate a public local entity or provide for the creation and designation of a joint powers groundwater management authority.

No later than two years after the board has designated a groundwater management authority, the authority would be required to adopt a groundwater management program which contains a detailed statement of objectives and a plan for achieving these objectives. When conditions such as long-term overdraft or poor water quality exist, the authority would be empowered to limit, control, or prohibit pumping of groundwater.

A groundwater management program could not be effective until it was approved by the State Water Resources Control Board after public notice and an opportunity for public hearing had been given. In addition, this section would prohibit the board from approving any application to appropriate water for an interbasin transfer to any of the specified basins until the board had approved a groundwater management program covering the basin. Furthermore, commencing one year after the effective date of this measure and until the approval of a groundwater management program for a given basin, only land within the basin that has been irrigated during at least one of the preceding three years could be irrigated.

- **Miscellaneous Provisions.** Under the measure every public entity in California would be required to implement the measure's policies and provisions to the fullest extent possible. In addition, the measure would provide that any person may challenge a final State Water Resources Control Board action, but must do so within 60 days after the action. The measure also would allow the board, any private individual, or the Attorney General to enforce various portions of its provisions by court actions.

The authority of the Legislature to amend the measure would be limited.



STOP!

Please go to the online survey, enter the 4-character code for this ballot measure (printed at the top and bottom of this page) and answer the survey questions.