
MEMORANDUM

To: Orange County Sanitation District
From: Townsend Public Affairs
Date: October 17, 2024
Subject: October 2024 Monthly Report

STATE LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

The month of September saw the conclusion of legislative activity with the Governor taking action on the last of the 1,206 bills that were sent to his desk. In total, the Governor signed 1,017 bills and vetoed 189, marking a slightly higher than average veto rate over his tenure. The most common reason cited for vetoes was the state's budget deficit and the concern that measures would exacerbate the state's delicate fiscal footing. Other veto messages included warnings of controversial policy, legality, local control, or implementation. The vast majority of bills will go into effect January 1, 2025, while some have a delayed effective date to allow state or local agencies to prepare.

Additionally, on December 2, lawmakers will return to Sacramento to swear in newly elected members and kick off the 2025-26 Legislative Session. This "Organizational Session" also marks the first day members are permitted to introduce new bill vehicles for the upcoming session. Bill introductions that occur during the preliminary session are typically reserved for "big concept" measures that are priorities for members. Following the November 2024 election, the Legislature is expected to have over 25 percent new members, in addition to the nearly 30 percent new members from the last election cycle. This drastic turnover of legislators will bring forward several new priorities, leaders, political facets, and bill ideas.

Sites Reservoir Allowed to Move Forward After Win in Court

The long-awaited Sites Reservoir Project in Northern California came under legal scrutiny from conservation groups challenging the project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) last year. In a victory for the project, the Third District Court of Appeal struck down the lawsuit allowing preparation for the reservoir to continue. At issue was the environmental impact report (EIR) required under CEQA and the impact the project would have on the surrounding environment. Normally, EIRs and CEQA lawsuits can take years to litigate, however, the court was able to act quickly because of [SB 149](#) (Caballero) that allows for judicial streamlining reducing the time in court to 270 days.

Aside from litigation, funding has been the primary issue for the project. Funding from Proposition 1 of 2014 will now be contributed to the new reservoir which is finally set to break ground in 2026. Up to 1.5 million acre-feet of water will be stored from rain capture and snow runoff, saving enough water for up to 3 million households per year which will be critical in times of future drought. This water supply project could have major impacts in the availability of potable water via the State Water Project for Orange County water suppliers and could contribute to minimum wastewater flow standards needed to operate GWRS at full capacity.