



## For water's sake, regulate softeners

Rich Atwater

Created: 08/26/2009 07:37:00 PM PDT

An extraordinary coalition of business, agriculture, environmental and local governments have come together to support Assembly Bill 1366 (Feuer/Caballero/A. Strickland), which will provide our community with the authority to protect our water quality from the salinity impacts caused by a specific type of residential water softener - the self-regenerating devices that require the use of bags and bags of salt to make the equipment work.

As California struggles through the third year of drought and moves forward with discussions about how to solve problems in the San Francisco Bay Delta, we need to tackle all aspects of our water crisis. For years, however, state law has unduly constrained local water agencies from determining how best to address one significant water supply and quality issue - excess salinity in some surface and groundwater supplies caused, in part, by residential self-regenerating water softeners. AB 1366 takes a measured approach to solve this problem.

Current law gives local and regional agencies wide latitude to regulate salinity inputs from every other source - agricultural, commercial and industrial, except home water softeners. Never mind that one typical self-regenerating home

water softener can dump up to 30 pounds of salt into the sewer system each month, contributing salinity that can make water recycling cost-prohibitive.

It is time to change the law that continues to place the interests of one industry over the interests of all other businesses, agriculture and, significantly, ratepayers.

The experience of the Santa Clarita Valley in northern Los Angeles County underscores why.

The Sanitation District instituted a voluntary rebate program followed by ban on residential use of self-regenerating water softeners, with reimbursement for any units that were removed.

The result: The vast majority of Santa Clarita's water softeners are now gone. As a result, the salt added has dropped by almost half.

Had the Sanitation District been forced to remove the equivalent amount of salt through advanced wastewater treatment upgrades with reverse osmosis desalination - as has occurred elsewhere in California - ratepayers would have paid more than 30 times as much as the rebate and reimbursement program cost.

The lesson of Santa Clarita is clear - expanding the options of publicly accountable local agencies in dealing with salinity issues, as AB 1366 aims to do, can save ratepayers millions of dollars.

Here in the Inland Empire our residents and

Advertisement



**UNIVERSITY of  
SAN FRANCISCO**

### End-to-End Training as It Should Be: 100% ONLINE!

#### Earn Your Master Certificate in Internet Marketing

- SEO & Paid Search
- Online Branding
- Web Analytics

- Internet Law
- Media Buying
- Social Media



1-800-268-9943  
USanFranOnline.com/FD

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

dailybulletin.com

businesses have invested hundreds of millions in the development of our local recycled water and groundwater supplies to drought proof our economy. With the state now predicting dramatic reductions in California's future water supplies due to problems in the Delta and climate change, we must take action to protect the water supplies we have. This means we need to support the passage of AB 1366 and start using non-salt-based water softening devices.

*Rich Atwater is general manger of Inland Empire Utilities Agency, which is a co-sponsor of AB 1366. Other co-sponsors are: Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, Irvine Ranch Water District, the Water Replenishment District of Southern California, and the WateReuse Association. The agency offers a residential self-regenerating water softener rebate of up to \$2,000 with free disconnection and removal. For more information, please visit [www.ieua.org](http://www.ieua.org).*

Advertisement



**Florida Tech**  
UNIVERSITY ONLINE

**Bring the Classroom to Your Home  
With a Degree Online From Florida Tech**

 **APPLY TODAY!**  
FloridaTechOnline.com/FD | 1-888-253-5946

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™