



THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT  
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

*Office of the Board of Directors*

February 7, 2022

**VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**

Sylvia Ballin, Councilmember  
San Fernando City Council  
117 Macneil Street  
San Fernando, CA 91340

Re: Appointment of Metropolitan Board of Directors Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs

Dear Councilmember Ballin,

I was disappointed to receive your letter regarding my proposed appointments of committee chairs and vice chairs at Metropolitan's January 25, 2022, Executive Committee and Special Board meeting. During your time on the Metropolitan Board, you were a strong advocate for women. As the second woman and first woman of color to be Chair of Metropolitan's Board, it was unexpected that you would take the lead on two occasions in an unprecedented challenge to my attempt to complete the routine and, in Metropolitan's history, previously unchallenged role of appointing Board leadership.

From your time serving on this board you know that forming a slate is the Chair's responsibility, and I endeavored and worked for over a year to solicit this board's input to ensure a balanced and equitable slate. The leadership slate that I proposed is consistent with the diversity on the Board. Your letter asserts that I should have considered the regional, state, and national ethnicity in my selection. The current ethnic composition of the Metropolitan Board is not the same as the ethnic composition of California. For example, the July 1, 2021 United States Census estimate for California lists the non-Hispanic white population in California as 36.5%. The Metropolitan Board is 57% white. Women comprise 50.2% of California's population but only 36.8% of the Metropolitan Board. While I worked hard to select a diverse slate based on criteria including and in addition to gender and ethnicity, members of the Board should neither be chosen nor excluded from leadership positions based solely upon race or gender. Metropolitan's directors are not selected by me, their respective agencies appoint them, and each brings their knowledge, expertise, and the unique perspective of their member agency to the issues Metropolitan is facing, and each member of the Board should be valued.

Your assertion that appointing members to leadership positions who did not vote to select the current General Manager contradicts the inclusive nature of the General Manager's "One Water-One People" agenda. Metropolitan was fortunate to have several excellent candidates compete for the position of General Manager. To suggest that directors or member agencies should be penalized or excluded from leadership positions based upon whether they voted to hire the current General Manager is inconsistent with the "We Are One" policy of the General Manager

Councilmember Ballin  
February 7, 2022

and the Board's demonstrated support for him. For instance, the Board approved the creation of One Water, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and Underserved Communities committees, which brings focus to these critical issues and are consistent with and support the General Manager's "One Water-One People" mantra. Further, my slate proposed various chairs and vice chairs that voted for the current General Manager, one of which is your present representative on our Board, who unfortunately who opposed the slate. Our common goal is for Metropolitan to meet the needs of all member agencies and the Metropolitan service area. For Metropolitan to succeed, our General Manager needs to succeed, and the full Board is working to that end.

Your reference to the Shaw Law Group investigations is unrelated to the leadership slate. The committee and Board will determine how best to handle the investigation reports. Further, your comments regarding Director Kurtz are irrelevant and inappropriate. In her role with the City of Pasadena, Director Kurtz is free to take those actions that best serve Pasadena. Those choices neither create a conflict nor disqualify her from serving in a leadership position on the Metropolitan Board.

While it is unfortunate that the proposed leadership slate was not approved, I will continue to work for unity on the Metropolitan Board and focus my efforts and those of the Board on the serious and substantive issues relating to Metropolitan's mission to provide its service area with adequate and reliable supplies of water.

My entire public service career has been dedicated to ensuring greater access and opportunities for women and people of color and will remain at the forefront of my legacy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gloria Gray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gloria" and last name "Gray" clearly distinguishable.

Gloria D. Gray  
Chairwoman of the Board

cc: Metropolitan Water District Board of Directors  
Adel Hagekhalil, General Manager, MWD  
Abel Salinas, Ethics Officer, MWD  
Mary Mendoza, Mayor, City of San Fernando  
San Fernando City Council  
Nick Kimball, City Manager, City of San Fernando

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# THE CITY OF SAN FERNANDO

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CITY COUNCIL

MAYOR  
MARY MENDOZA

January 25, 2022

VICE MAYOR  
HECTOR A. PACHECO

COUNCILMEMBER  
SYLVIA BALLIN

COUNCILMEMBER  
CINDY MONTAÑEZ

COUNCILMEMBER  
CELESTE T. RODRIGUEZ

**VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**

The Honorable Gloria Gray  
Chairwoman of the Board  
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California  
700 N. Alameda Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90013

**Subject: Agenda Item 7-1 (Appointment of Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs)**

Dear Chairwoman Gray,

It has been a year since you attempted to appoint your second term leadership team for the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. I have followed this closely and am writing to urge you to withdraw Item 7-1 from the agenda on January 25, 2022. You have made much progress in uniting the board since the summer of 2021, and I'm afraid that the slate you have presented will rekindle divisions. As a member of the board in 2021 when this topic came up, I objected to the original slate for its lack of diversity, which you campaigned for in your re-election effort. The 2022 slate does not add diversity even with the creation of a committee on Underserved Communities, and another on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), rendering them, in effect, window dressing.

By my count, you are proposing to appoint 19 white persons and 8 persons of color (if one counts the double appointments individually) to the positions of Committee Chair and Vice Chair. You also are seeking to appoint 16 men and 8 women by similar count for those positions. These disparities are inconsistent with any measure one might apply. It does not reflect the diversity of MWD's service area, the State of California, or even the United States.

What I find most discouraging is that the slate cannot be justified on a policy basis either.

OFFICE OF THE  
CITY COUNCIL

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**Honorable Gloria Gray, Chairwoman of the Board**  
**Metropolitan Water District of Southern California**  
Agenda Item 7-1 (Appointment of Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs)  
Page 2 of 3

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Of the 28 positions you are appointing, 21 of the nominees did not support the hiring of the current General Manager just a few months ago. This represents a 3 to 1 margin over those you are seeking to appoint who voted with the majority to hire the General Manager.

This is significant for reasons that have immediate implications. For example, you are proposing to appoint as Chair of the Audit and Ethics Committee, a board member who recently hired a person who engaged in retaliation when he worked at MWD.

According to the Ethics Officer who addressed this matter on January 11, that was fully substantiated in a supplemental investigation by the Shaw Group, and has yet to be released to the MWD Board of Directors. The conflict of interest in this case, some would argue is glaring.

We appreciate that you nominated the City of San Fernando's delegate to Chair the Committee on Underserved Communities. However, being persons of color in an underserved community, it is easy to recognize the signpost of marginalization. With the policy bias on the recommended Executive Committee so tilted against the General Manager's policy agenda of "One Water, One People," it's hard to imagine how any meaningful policy will make it to the committee agenda addressing One Water and Underserved Communities.

As I mentioned earlier in this letter, addressing workplace issues at MWD is a high priority for San Fernando. It is my understanding that the four remaining investigation reports by the Shaw Group were received at MWD in November 2021. The fact that the reports have not been shared with the board and publicly released undermine the claims of transparency by the agency's leaders. But I have faith in your desire to resolve these issues once and for all.

In many respects, assuring the workforce and restoring an environment of trust overall can be the hallmark of your legacy as a leader at MWD. If your slate is controversial among the board, it is only so because there is an absence of basic trust among good people with policy differences. It is up to you to foster a place where the wounds of distrust can continue to heal, and to recognize that the assignment of these committee leadership positions can erode your overall goals.

Councilmember Ballin  
February 7, 2022

**Honorable Gloria Gray, Chairwoman of the Board  
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California**

Agenda Item 7-1 (Appointment of Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs)  
Page 3 of 3

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We appreciate your efforts of bringing unity to MWD's board. I have also asked our delegate to work towards reconciliation and unity at MWD, even at the expense of not having a leadership position on the board. Regretfully, the naming of leadership positions at the current time will create more division and potential controversy. I sincerely hope that you will act to avert the acrimony over the horizon.

Sincerely yours,



Sylvia Ballin

Councilmember

City of San Fernando

& Former Board Member of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

Cc: Adel Hagekhalil, General Manager, MWD

Abel Salinas, Ethics Officer

Rosa Castro, Board Secretary, for distribution to the Board of Secretary, for  
distribution to the Board of Directors

Mayor Mary Mendoza

Nick Kimball, City Manager