



City of Long Beach
Working Together to Serve

R-20
Office of Gerrie Schipske
Councilwoman, Fifth District
Memorandum

Date: August 14, 2007

To: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

From: Councilmember Suja Lowenthal, Second District *SL*
Councilwoman Gerrie Schipske, Fifth District *GS*
Councilwoman Tonia Reyes Uranga, Seventh District *TRU*

Subject: AGENDA ITEM: Request to the Water Department to Alter Language to Labels on Single Bottles of Water

BACKGROUND

In June, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, conducted the National City Water Taste Test to recognize the quality and taste of municipal water systems. Long Beach was one of the five finalists.

The Conference of Mayors also passed a resolution acknowledging that United States' municipal water systems are among the finest in the world, providing high quality, safe and affordable drinking water to our citizens and urged a study of the impact of bottled water on municipal waste.

At present, municipalities invest approximately \$43 billion a year for pure drinking water and treating wastewater. However, U.S. consumers spend more than \$11 billion a year on bottled water. Bottled water costs more than an equivalent volume of gasoline, equivalent to 1,000 to 10,000 times more than tap water.

Another advantage of tap water is that it contains fluoride. Fluoride combats tooth decay in two ways. It strengthens tooth enamel, a hard and shiny substance that protects the teeth, so that it can better resist the acid formed by plaque. Fluoride also allows teeth damaged by acid to repair, or remineralize themselves. Fluoride cannot repair cavities, but it can reverse low levels of tooth decay and thus prevent new cavities from forming. It is especially critical to the health of developing teeth in children. And, despite all the good news about dental health, tooth decay remains one of the most common diseases of childhood.

The other major issue raised about bottled water is the use of plastic bottles, which are derived from crude oil, (polyethylene terephthalate (PET)). In the U.S. the plastic bottles produced for water require 1.5 million barrels of oil per year, enough to generate electricity for 250,000 homes or fuel 100,000 cars for a year.

Plastic bottles are one of the fastest growing sources of municipal waste. More than 60 million plastic bottles end up in landfills and incinerators every day – a total of about 22

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

Request to the Water Department to Alter Language to Labels on Single Bottles of Water

Councilmember Suja Lowenthal, Second District

Councilwoman Gerrie Schipske, Fifth District

Councilwoman Tonia Reyes Uranga

August 14, 2007

Page 2

billion last year. Six times as many plastic water bottles were thrown away in the US in 2004 as in 1997.

The Long Beach Water Department (and Council offices) provide a beneficial service by donating quality bottled tap water to community groups for events. However, this service presents a prime opportunity to educate Long Beach residents about the good tasting, affordable water available to them every day at their tap.

RECOMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council request the City Manager work with the Long Beach Water Department to add language to its bottled water labels promoting the use of tap by residents and businesses and develop a means for including biodegradable bags to collect plastic bottles for recycling.