Fact Sheet: Local Government Reorganizations

Special districts give voters and communities the ability to buy just the amount of government they need, while focusing on local and regional needs. Large or small, they are sensitive and responsive to the neighborhoods and regions they serve. They may also be one of the few government agencies in recent years to actually decline in numbers—a report by the Senate Local Government Committee shows the number of independent districts has dropped by more than 150 (7%) in the past 20 years—and most of those consolidations were actually initiated by the special districts themselves.

Existing Law

District reorganization can be initiated by either the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) or a local district. Reorganizations are researched and approved by the local LAFCo, whose mandated goal is to assure that changes in governmental organization occur in a manner which encourages orderly growth, discourages sprawl, preserves agricultural and open space lands, and *safeguards the delivery of efficient and quality municipal services.* Ultimately, the power to reorganize special districts rests with the local citizens that created them.

CSDA-Supported Improvements to Law

SB 135 (Kehoe, Chapter 249, 2005) revised the Community Services District Law (Govt. Code § 61000). This bill provided LAFCo the ability to prohibit formation of new agencies that are not determined fiscally viable, as well as prohibit the formation of community services districts that do not have sufficient resources to carry out their purposes.

SB 819 (Hollingsworth, Chapter 98, 2007) deleted the July 1, 2008, sunset date for statutory provisions that allow LAFCos to consolidate and reorganize special districts that were not formed under the same principal act. This bill also allowed LAFCo to initiate the formation of new special districts and made the reorganization process much more efficient and cost-effective.

SB 1023 (Wiggins, Chapter 68, 2010) created an expedited procedure for converting resort improvement districts (RIDs) and municipal improvement districts (MIDs) that operate under archaic statutes into community services districts, without substantive changes to their powers, duties, finances, or service areas.

For Example – Districts Reorganizing for Better Service

- **The Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District** consolidated and replaced 16 predecessor fire agencies and completed reorganization in 2000. The greater economies of scale allowed the district to offer better protection and more services to area residents, including wild land firefighting, structural firefighting, crash fire rescue, technical rescue, swift water rescue, hazardous material mitigation, and paramedic medical services.
- **The Consumnes Community Services District** formed in 1985 as the successor to the Elk Grove Fire Protection District and the Elk Grove Recreation and Park District, expanded in 2006 when it consolidated with the adjacent Galt Fire Protection District. Today, the two fire departments operate as one, serving growing communities with modern practices and equipment.
- **Murrieta County Water District** was consolidated into Western Municipal Water district in 2005 in order to bring stability to a district facing multiple service problems due to undercapitalization challenges. Murrieta's water came mostly from wells and imported water at a higher cost, but the board of directors estimated that the district would not be able to meet all customer needs with the existing resources.

For more information, visit www.csda.net or www.acwa.com.