
Meeting Date: September 20, 2017
Staff Contact: Mark S. Sanchez, Executive Director

TITLE: R-17-17 – Requesting That The Board of County Commissioners Of The County Of Bernalillo Place An Advisory Question On The 2018 General Election Ballot Concerning Adding Supplemental Fluoride To The Drinking Water

ACTION: Approval

BACKGROUND:

Fluoride has been a contentious issue for decades. In 1970, the City of Albuquerque placed the question before the voters to gage the public support for adding supplemental fluoridation. The question passed by 57% margin. It has been 47 years since this issue was placed before the voters on whether they support supplemental fluoridation. Additionally, the question was limited to city voters, since then thousands of public water supply connections have occurred in Bernalillo County. This resolution has been requested by Commissioner O'Malley, Vice Chair and Councilor Pat Davis.

SUMMARY:

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Federal Panel on Community Water Fluoridation has issued a final recommendation which concludes that the optimal concentration of fluoride in drinking water is 0.7 milligrams/liter (mg/L). According to the report, drinking water with fluoride in concentrations of 0.7mg/L provides the best balance of protection from dental caries while limiting the risk of dental fluorosis.

http://www.publichealthreports.org/documents/PHS_2015_Fluoride_Guidelines.pdf

The drinking water currently served by the Water Authority naturally contains fluoride from ground water sources in an average concentration of 0.5 mg/L. To meet the 0.7 mg/L recommended fluoride standard would require that the Water Authority change current practice and begin to add supplemental fluoride to the drinking water. Funding to allow the Water Authority to begin a supplemental fluoride program was proposed by staff to be included in the FY18. The proposed appropriation for supplemental fluoride generated substantial public interest and controversy concerning the advisability of supplemental fluoride. At its June 21, 2017 meeting and again at its August 23, 2017 meeting, the Board heard public comment on whether to approve the appropriations for both the one-time \$250,000 equipment purchase and the \$250,000 of first year chemical costs necessary for the supplemental fluoride program as an amendment to the FY18 budget appropriation. The Resolution finds that whether or not the majority of the voter's favor or oppose the addition of supplemental fluoride to Water Authority drinking water to meet the 0.7 mg/L

public health recommendation is an unsettled question and of general public interest in Bernalillo County.

Based on this finding, the Resolution requests that the Bernalillo County Commission submit to County voters in the November 2018 general election a ballot question to determine if voters favor or oppose the addition of supplemental fluoride to the drinking water distributed by the Water Authority.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Passage of the Resolution has no fiscal impact to Water Authority. Because it requests the addition of a ballot question to an already scheduled election, it should not have a fiscal impact on State and County budgets.

1 WHEREAS, while the result of the election on this question would not be binding
2 on the Water Authority, its governing Board believes that permitting the public to
3 express its sentiment on an issue that has significant local impact may well represent
4 the purest form of democracy upon which this nation was founded, and moreover, such
5 results will provide further information to aid in the Board's consideration of the issue.

6 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD, THE GOVERNING
7 BODY OF THE WATER AUTHORITY:

8 Section 1. The Board finds that whether or not the majority of the voters favor or
9 oppose the addition of supplemental fluoride to Water Authority drinking water to meet
10 the public health recommendation of an average concentration of 0.7 mg/L is an
11 unsettled question and of general public interest in Bernalillo County.

12 Section 2. Based on this finding, the Board respectfully requests that the Board
13 of County Commissioners of the County of Bernalillo place an advisory question on the
14 November 2018 general election ballot to determine if county voters favor or oppose the
15 addition of supplemental fluoride to the drinking water distributed by the Water Authority
16 to meet the recommended fluoride standard average of 0.7mg/L.

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