



## City Council Agenda Item

**City Council Meeting Date:** April 20, 2021

**TO:** Jim Throop, City Manager

**FROM:** Charles J. Berry, Utility Director  
c\_berry@ci.lompoc.ca.us

**SUBJECT:** Approval of Letters to State Senator Limón and Assemblymember Cunningham Expressing Support for Relief to Utility Customers with Past-Due Utility Bills Due to the Impacts of COVID-19

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### **Recommendation:**

Staff recommends the City Council review the attached letters in support of customer assistance for utility bills, and direct the City Manager or his delegate to sign and send them.

### **Background:**

Current estimates suggest water/wastewater and publicly owned electric utility customers in the State of California are collectively more than \$1 billion in arrears on overdue bills. The attached letters of support are intended to urge the State of California Legislature to allocate funding to provide significant relief for Californians who continue to struggle with economic and personal difficulties due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Discussion:**

The City is a member of the California Municipal Utilities Association and as such, is seeking to partner in a letter campaign, with other municipal agencies. The intent of that letter campaign is to urge the State Legislature to allocate funding, and direct it to past-due utility bills, to provide relief for customers experiencing hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

At this time, the City is experiencing more than \$4,970,636 in past-due utility accounts. That balance represents approximately 38% of customers and the balance continues to grow. The result of the arrearages is negatively impacting City finances and the community. Customers are struggling to cope with an unprecedented pandemic, leaving many unable to pay their utility bill.

The goal of the letter campaign is to urge the State Legislature to allocate at least \$1 billion in additional and dedicated funding to the various public utility agencies in the state to be used to work with customers in providing direct assistance with past due utility bills.

**Fiscal Impact:**

There is no fiscal impact to the City's General Fund, nor any Enterprise Fund.

**Conclusion:**

A letter of support urging the State of California Legislature to provide COVID-19 assistance for publicly owned water and electric customers, joined with letters from other publicly owned utilities, will encourage the Legislature to take affirmative action.

Respectfully submitted,

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Charles J. Berry, Utility Director

**APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL TO THE CITY COUNCIL:**

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Jim Throop, City Manager

Attachment: Letters of Support