



Water/Sewer Districts

(authorized by RCW Title 57)

These special purpose districts provide domestic water and sanitary sewer service to approximately 2 million residents of Washington State

Water/sewer districts in WA State are similar to those in other Western states

- ◆ Water/sewer services are provided by districts and municipalities
- ◆ Water/sewer districts serve cities and unincorporated areas
- ◆ In some states, water districts are primary providers
- ◆ In many arid and rural states, water district boundaries are linked to water basins



Governmental Profile

- ◆ Governed by elected Board of Commissioners
- ◆ Districts have no general property taxing authority
- ◆ Districts have no land use authority and must have state and local government approval of their comprehensive plans
- ◆ Districts that provide water must plan pursuant to RCW 70.116 – Public Water System Coordination Act
- ◆ Districts serve in urban, suburban and rural communities; Larger districts serve multiple jurisdictions



Consolidations, Mergers and Dissolutions

- ◆ RCW 57 contains numerous provisions for consolidation, merger and dissolution of districts
- ◆ The number of districts has steadily decreased over the past 3 decades due to consolidation, mergers and assumptions
- ◆ Many districts are now regional providers – examples include Lakehaven, Soos Creek, Alderwood, Lakewood, Clark Regional Wastewater, and Highline – all of which serve a number of jurisdictions



Challenges - Assumption

- ◆ RCW 35.13A allows certain cities to unilaterally assume all or part of a water/sewer district without a vote of citizens affected or consent of the governing body of the district
- ◆ “Friendly” assumptions work; “Hostile” ones do not
- ◆ “Hostile” assumptions are costly, divisive and result in negative impacts for citizens



Challenges - PWTF

- ◆ Districts have relied on the Public Works Trust Fund to help finance infrastructure projects
- ◆ Loans are critical to maintaining and improving State's infrastructure
- ◆ Public Works Trust Fund should not be diverted in order to balance the budget: that is diverting our future



Suggestions for legislation

- ◆ Allow larger districts to participate in alternative public works bidding process in a similar manner as cities, counties and larger port districts
- ◆ Provide that performance bonds on construction projects be payable to district similar to option available for counties and cities
- ◆ Reform assumption statute (RCW 35.13A) to provide for a vote in cases where cities and districts cannot agree

