

Baptist Ministers Conference of Los Angeles and Southern California

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Office of the President

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Water Replenishment District Board of Director
4040 Paramount Blvd
Lakewood California, 90712

Dear WRD Board of Directors:

We want to applaud the WRD for moving in the right direction to make the management of your water district begin to look more like our community. In the words of President Lincoln, the United States of America was "conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal" and "that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." However, in order to truly fulfill this promise our government must necessarily not only be of the people, for the people, but also *look like the people*.

And while we previously made great strides in this regard, this was severely tested over the last four years; directly and indirectly, with alternative facts and blatant hypocrisy and double standards. As we turn a new page with a Biden-Harris Administration let us also end this period of pretextual duplicity. Including and specifically in the employment context, because if an employment standard was good enough for one, barring some exceptional circumstance, it should remain sufficient and adequate for any and all prospective Black-and-Brown employees too.

Which brings me back to WRD. As we understand it, 70% of the residents in WRD's service area are Black-and-Brown, yet amazingly of WRD's 11 management positions none are African American and only two are Latino! And this is in the most progressive state in the union. Thus, WRD seems to be failing in doing its part to fulfill the promise. However, with the recent hiring of Albert Robles as WRD General Manager some, we say some, progress is made.

But, as we further understand it, some do not care for this most recent hiring. If someone does not like Albert Robles for whatever *legal* reason or if they wanted someone else to be the next WRD General Manager, that is their prerogative, but they should have the courage to say it publicly and not use a pretextual clearly bogus excuse that he is not qualified because he does not meet a new employment standard never before implemented. This tactic of moving the goal posts and having a double standard when it comes to hiring Black-and-Brown individuals cannot go unchallenged.

If the job description for WRD General Manager does not require that the person hired be a Professional Engineer (PE) or have an engineering degree, and WRD has never in its history ever had such a requirement, it should not be required now. In fact, the General Managers of other water districts in the area are not PEs nor have engineering degrees.

For example, the General Manager of Metropolitan Water District (among the largest water districts in the country with an annual budget of almost \$2 BILLION and close to 2,000 employees) is not a PE and does not have a degree in engineering, instead he has an undergraduate degree in history and a law degree from the Santa Clara University (the #107th Best Ranked Law School by *U.S. News and World Report*). Another example among many more is the General Manager of West Basin Municipal Water District (with an annual budget of over \$200 MILLION and about 80 employees and at least 2 times bigger than WRD), is also not a PE and does not have a degree in engineering, nor any other undergraduate degree for that matter. And by all accounts, few people if anyone opposed these two General Managers or other General Managers of other water districts on the grounds that they were not PEs nor did not have a degree in engineering.

However, somehow Albert Robles, who in addition to an undergraduate degree, has a Master's Degree in Public Administration from USC (where he was a USC Merit Scholarship Recipient) and a law degree from the *U.S. News and World Report* #9 ranked UC Berkeley's School of Law (where he graduated with honors) is pretextually not qualified just because he is not a PE nor has a degree in engineering? Folks may not like Albert Robles for one reason or another, but to try to use his education against him is unconscionable. His education, coupled with his 25-years of water experience undoubtedly makes him qualified to be WRD's General Manager, so let's stop the hypocrisy and double standards.

Moreover, these facts, taken together with reports that a succession plan was covertly afoot to quietly without a transparent process promote a White Assistant General Manager to be WRD's new General Manager and then promote another White employee to the anticipated vacated Assistant General Manager position, but was foiled by the Black-and-Brown members of WRD coming together should indeed be applauded.

Just because President Trump seemed to have no limits to his hypocrisy does not mean that it should not cease. These Trumpian tactics of blatant hypocrisy and double standards must be challenged whenever possible.

Respectfully submitted,

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