MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT OF ORANGE COUNTY

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April 3, 2006

Samuel W. Bodman
Secretary of Energy
United States Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

RE: ***Docket No. EE-RM-PET-100* Petition to Exempt from Preemption, California's Water Efficiency Standards for Residential Clothes Washers**

The Municipal Water District of Orange County supports the California Energy Commission petition to exempt from preemption Water Efficiency Standards for Residential Clothes Washers filed on behalf of the State of California. Sustainable water efficiency is a major aspect of our efforts to assure that a safe and reliable water supply is available to California citizens, businesses, and the supporting environment. Although a large groundwater basin underlying the northern half of Orange County provides about 75 percent of that area's needs, south Orange County is dependent on imported water to meet 95 percent of its potable needs. Water savings achieved through active implementation of water use efficiency programs represent a vital component of our overall water supply portfolio. We at the Municipal Water District of Orange County urge you to consider the unique characteristics of California that offer convincing reasons for this exemption. We ask that you consider the following:

California's Interests are Unusual and Compelling

California has the most extensive water importation and distribution system in the nation. Most of the water demand is more than 300 miles from the water source. The water source for the Municipal Water District of Orange County is Northern California through the State Water Project and the Colorado River, more than 440 and 240 miles respectively.

The extensive importation and distribution of water supplies not only increases costs, it greatly increases security risks. Much of California's water supply travels through the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay Delta, contained and channeled to Southern California through a myriad of levees. Now, these aging levees are susceptible to failure. The liability has become so great that the Governor of California has recently requested that the Delta levees be granted National Emergency status. Seawater intrusion threatens groundwater sources from over-pumping; further surface water interruptions could cause irreparable damage. No other state is so susceptible to the catastrophic effects of natural or

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intentional interruptions in water supply. Water use efficiency can minimize the severe negative impact of major interruptions in California's unique and precarious water supply network.

The Municipal Water District of Orange County serves 30 retail water agencies that serve 2.3 million residents. More than 50 percent of the water is imported. Improving water use efficiency is a vital part of our resource planning, and is the most viable source for water needed to meet the current and future needs of our customers. In addition, water efficiency minimizes the hardships our customers will endure in the event of a water supply crisis.

California's Unique Water-Economy Situation

California's economy, equivalent to that of the fifth largest country worldwide, is dependant on an adequate and reliable water supply. Impacting California's economy with water shortages will have a negative ripple effect on the entire nation. Water efficiency offers California its most cost-effective source of water to feed its economy; an economy the entire nation depends on for financial stability.

Alternative Approaches Implemented

There are many alternative cost-effective methods to improve water efficiency, and we are already implementing them. Improving the efficiency of clothes washers is only one part of the overall solution for reliable water supply, yet it is a vital part. The Municipal Water District of Orange County evaluates water efficiency options and water supply options equally in its planning process. We implement all of the most cost-effective strategies available. Improving the efficiency of clothes washers does not supplant other reasonable means available. Our efforts to provide a reliable supply of water include investing $3-$7 million per year toward implementation of all 14 Best Management Practices for water use efficiency.

Exemption from Preemption is Necessary

Water efficiency standards for appliances are not the only solution, but are a very important part of a large array of strategies to solve our impending water crisis. Clothes washers are a major water user in 80 percent of homes. High efficiency washers save more than 50 percent of the water wasted by traditional washers. A typical family using a non-efficient washer wastes more than 6,000 gallons of water per year. We must stop this waste by every means available, and without undue financial burden to the ratepayers. In Orange County, the Exemption could aid in saving more than 7,400 acre-feet of water per year, which could meet the needs of more than 18,000 families per year. Currently, our only available action is to offer rebates to encourage the purchase of high-efficiency washers; this method has limited effect and is very costly,

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compared to appliance standards. Ratepayers bear an undue burden because washer efficiency standards cannot be adopted by the state.

We urge you to accept California's petition to allow California to determine its own water future without the need for federal assistance. Please grant the preemption necessary for California, its citizens, and the Municipal Water District of Orange County to secure a safe and reliable water supply for the state.

Sincerely,

Kevin P. Hunt
General Manager
Municipal Water District of Orange County