

Marshall Wood, Board member, Riverbend Water Resources District

Written testimony to be submitted to the Sunset Advisory Commission regarding the review of the Sulphur River Basin Authority

My name is Marshall Wood and I currently serve as a Board member for Riverbend Water Resources District located in Northeast Texas. Thank you for allowing me to address you this morning.

I am pleased with the progress we have seen from the Sulphur River Basin Authority (SRBA) in the last 30 days in addressing concerns highlighted in the Sunset Report. But we should not lose sight of the full scope of what the Sunset process is charged with doing and that is to review SRBA's full body of work, or lack thereof, for the last 30 years.

The Sunset staff spent a great deal of time researching, collecting data and reviewing stakeholder concerns and input and I trust their work and the Sunset process.

I agree with their recommendations including those that call for sweeping the board of previous appointments and providing Governor Abbott the opportunity to appoint the Chairman. The Governor's appointment may well be Mr. Sandefur who has already demonstrated a strong commitment to reform.

I would also like to elaborate a little further on a couple of issues highlighted in the report.

Independent funding for SRBA - I cannot stress enough the importance of this. The funding arrangement that exists currently between the Joint Commission for Planning and Development (JCPD) and SRBA is plagued with problems. JCPD meetings are not open to the public but certainly appear to be where all the real decisions are made regarding SRBA. It is important to note that local stakeholders have asked to attend these meetings but have been denied access for years. If you attend SRBA meetings, it is not unusual to hear board members reference the need to do something because JCPD asked them to do so. A recent example of this occurred at the May 2016 SRBA meeting where the Board was told that they had to approve a proposed budget at that meeting because they had been asked to by their funding partners, JCPD. The public was never provided a copy of this budget prior to approval.

Local control - The local stakeholders have been relegated to the role of spectator in their own basin by SRBA. The historic water rights holders and local communities have been completely left out of the study processes. In order to ensure that the local needs are protected, I recommend adding legislative protections such as requiring SRBA to obtain 2/3's approval from the Region D Board before serving as local sponsor on a water supply project that would primarily serve the needs outside of the basin. This legislative change would help support new SRBA board members in the challenge of balancing needs both inside and outside of the basin.

SRBA has a long history on non-transparency, ignoring the needs of the locals and producing

questionable study data as it relates to the Sulphur River Basin Authority. Legislative structural changes are needed in order to set SRBA on a constructive path if their next 30 years are to look any different than their last 30 years.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments and please do not hesitate to contact me if I may be of further assistance.