

Is New DWP GM David Wright Out of His Mind?

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LA WATCHDOG--David Wright (photo above on left front with Mayor Garcetti) is an excellent choice to be the permanent General Manager of our Department of Water and Power. But you have to wonder why we would endorse Wright as he has to have a screw or two loose if he is willing to take a position that is the toughest job in the City.

He will be caught in a crossfire between skeptical Ratepayers who are concerned about ever increasing rates, the environmental lobby where money is no object, a domineering union and its rich contract and overly restrictive work rules, the media who loves to put DWP on the front page, the public's demand for increased transparency, the Mayor and the City Council who view the Department as an ATM, and the credit rating agencies.

At the same time, he and his management team are responsible for leading a complex enterprise with 9,000 employees, \$5 billion in annual revenues, and a five year capital budget of over \$13 billion that is designed to finance numerous unfunded mandates and regulations and update the Department's water and power infrastructure.

He has to be crazy.

Nevertheless, Tony Wilkinson (Chair of the Neighborhood Council DWP Memorandum of Understanding Oversight Committee and an active participant in developing the November ballot measure to reform certain aspects of Department) and I sent the following letter to City Council President Herb Wesson endorsing Wright as our next General Manager.

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City Council President Herb Wesson
Los Angeles City Hall

Appointment of David Wright as LADWP General Manager

Dear Herb,

This is a critical time for the Department of Water and Power which is why we support naming David Wright as its permanent General Manager.

The City has placed on the November ballot a measure to reform the Department of Water and Power. This reform will also require additional legislation by the City Council. However, it appears that the City's unions and other organizations are preparing to oppose this reform as they are putting their own interests ahead of those of the Ratepayers and the City.

The Department is also in the midst of a major capital expenditure program to update its infrastructure, to repower its generating capacity so that 33% of our energy will be from renewable resources by 2020, and to meet numerous clean water requirements.

The Department is also engaged in many internal reforms, including the establishment of the Administrative System Services unit to replace the "Joint Services" operation. This new division will focus on improving customer service and the billing systems, establishing a more efficient personnel department, modernizing information technology and computer systems, enhancing physical and cyber security, and creating a more efficient procurement and contracting operation.

Over the last five years, under the management of knowledgeable industry executives, the Department has made considerable progress in meeting its goals. As such, it makes sense to continue with our existing management team and avoid the risk of bringing in an outside General Manager who does not have a working knowledge of the Department, its people, its goals, its Ratepayers, the City Council, and the Mayor.

We are fortunate to have David Wright, the Interim General Manager who has been the Department's Chief Operating Officer for the past year. He has a strong industry background and is knowledgeable about the Department and its operations. He also has had considerable experience with other organizations, which will allow him to introduce new ideas to the Department.

Importantly, Marcie Edwards has endorsed David, in large part because of the excellent job he has done in addressing the billing fiasco caused by a flawed Customer Information System. He has made considerable progress in reorganizing and rationalizing Joint Services, a thankless but important job that nobody was willing or able to tackle.

As Ratepayers, we were impressed with Wright's August 6 presentation to the Neighborhood Council DWP MOU Oversight Committee where he emphasized the need for excellent customer service which in turn will improve the Department's reputation.

We strongly believe that selection of a new General Manager cannot wait until a year from now, when an entirely new and lengthy selection process may be in place. DWP needs a firm hand today. It needs a General Manager who is not handicapped by the term Interim in his title.

We urge you to make this process easy, put this task behind you, and name David Wright as the permanent General Manager of the Department of Water and Power.

Tony Wilkinson
NC DWP MOU Oversight Committee

Jack Humphreville
DWP (Advocacy) Committee

PS: We also recommend that the Department, the Board of Commissioners, the City Council, and the Mayor retain the services of Marcie Edwards for the next six months to facilitate an orderly transition, to assist the Department in analyzing pending legislation and regulations, and to protect DWP's assets from regionalization.

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