
Governing the Tap

Special District Governance and the New Local
Politics of Water

Megan Mullin

The MIT Press
Cambridge, Massachusetts
London, England

© 2009 Massachusetts Institute of Technology

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form by any electronic or mechanical means (including photocopying, recording, or information storage and retrieval) without permission in writing from the publisher.

For information about special quantity discounts, please email
special_sales@mitpress.mit.edu

This book was set in Sabon on 3B2 by Asco Typesetters, Hong Kong. Printed and bound in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Mullin, Megan, 1973–

Governing the tap : special district governance and the new local politics of water / Megan Mullin.

p. cm. — (American and comparative environmental policy)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-262-01313-0 (hardcover : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-0-262-51297-8 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Water utilities—United States. 2. Water districts—United States. I. Title.

HD4461.M85 2009

363.6'10973—dc22

2008044250

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Acknowledgments

This project took shape during my time at the University of California, Berkeley, and I owe many debts to that institution and the people there. Judy Gruber lit the spark for the project by introducing me to the thorny democratic dilemmas inherent in the delivery of public services. I am grateful to Ray Wolfinger, Margaret Weir, John Ellwood, and especially Bruce Cain for their guidance through the early stages of the research. Thanks also to Merrill Shanks, Todd LaPorte, Henry Brady, Michael Hanemann, the Graduate Workshop in American Politics, and the talented librarians and staff at the Institute of Governmental Studies and the Water Resources Center Archive. The Temple University Department of Political Science provided valuable resources and support to help me finish the book. I am particularly grateful to Gary Mucciaroni and Chris Wlezien for their useful insight on chapter drafts, and to Kevin Arce-neaux, who read the entire manuscript.

Portions of the book have been presented at Georgetown University, Temple University, the University of Michigan, MIT, the Harris School at the University of Chicago, Florida State University, the University of Kentucky, the University of Kansas, and annual meetings of the American Political Science Association and the Midwest Political Science Association. Discussants and audience members at all of these talks provided feedback that helped shape my arguments. Richard Dilworth and Alex Holzman made excellent suggestions at a critical moment in the book's development. In addition, I owe great thanks to Ellen Hanak for sharing data and her water expertise. Richard Krop at the Cadmus Group and Kurt Keeley and Patrick McElhany from the American Water Works Association also supplied data and answered many questions.

All of the people I interviewed for this project were generous with their time and thoughtful about the politics of retail water service. Many went

out of their way to help me locate archival documents. Yphtach Lelkes, Joshua Weikert, Jay Jennings, Christina Wong, and Elizabeth Mattiuzzi provided stellar research assistance. Financial support came from a National Science Foundation dissertation grant (SES-0315293) as well as from grants from the Department of Political Science, the Graduate Division, and the Institute of Governmental Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. My editor at MIT Press, Clay Morgan, kindly and efficiently guided me through the publishing process and selected three reviewers whose recommendations improved the manuscript. I also appreciate the support this project has received from the two series editors, Sheldon Kamieniecki and Michael Kraft. Much of chapter 3 appeared in 2008 in the *American Journal of Political Science*, and I thank the publisher for permission to use the material here. Ken and Soni Wright helped more than they probably know by providing a space to write where it was impossible to forget the importance of water governance. Among the many colleagues and friends who have advised and encouraged me, Dorothy Daley and Patrick Egan deserve special mention for their wisdom, patience, and very good humor.

A first book feels like the culmination of a lifetime of learning. I thank my family—Diane Mullin, the dearly missed Richard Mullin, Bea Holt, Ken Wright, Soni Wright, and my many fabulous siblings—for encouraging my inquisitiveness. Most of all, I am grateful to Waugh. It would take another book, or several, to say why.