

DOCKETED

Docket Number:	17-BSTD-02
Project Title:	2019 Title 24, Part 6, Building Energy Efficiency Standards Rulemaking
TN #:	224774
Document Title:	Electric Ratepayers Alliance Comments Regarding Imperial Irrigation Worked Hard to Push Back Against the Demand for Rooftop Solar and a Viable Solar Program
Description:	N/A
Filer:	System
Organization:	Electric Ratepayers Alliance
Submitter Role:	Public
Submission Date:	9/21/2018 4:15:26 PM
Docketed Date:	9/21/2018

*Comment Received From: Electric Ratepayers Alliance
Submitted On: 9/21/2018
Docket Number: 17-BSTD-02*

Regarding Imperial Irrigation Worked Hard to Push Back Against the Demand for Rooftop Solar and a Viable Solar Program

Additional submitted attachment is included below.



August 27, 2018

Dear Concerned Citizen:

We all know that Imperial Irrigation has worked hard to push back against the demand for rooftop solar and a viable solar program for its ratepayers. In fact, they are currently in a lawsuit with the Riverside County Board of Supervisors over an ordinance that would mandate that they offer a program similar to that of their neighboring utility, Southern California Edison, so those in their territory will have an opportunity to insure themselves against inevitable future rate hikes, save money, and do their part to avoid fossil fuel energy generation.

IID would have you believe they are fighting rooftop solar because of its “unfairness” to those who can’t afford it, and because it will cause grid “imbalance”, but that’s just smoke and mirrors. As the enclosed summary of an investigative article from The Desert Sun shows, it’s more about protecting their own board seats and doing favors for their friends.

And as the article explained, it turns out that farming interests, and one farmer in particular, has been working behind the scenes using his friendship with board members, staff and consultants to position a big part of his land as a solar farm, and that’s one of the reasons IID has been so hostile to distributed generation and solar on residential rooftops.

Read the summary, and the full article if you wish, and decide for yourself. The Electric Ratepayers Alliance, and its members, is working hard to advocate for families, businesses and nonprofits that can benefit from clean, renewable energy. And we believe it’s time for all utilities to work to figure out the best way to integrate solar from the ratepayers themselves into their plans, as fighting it is simply denying the inevitable outcome.

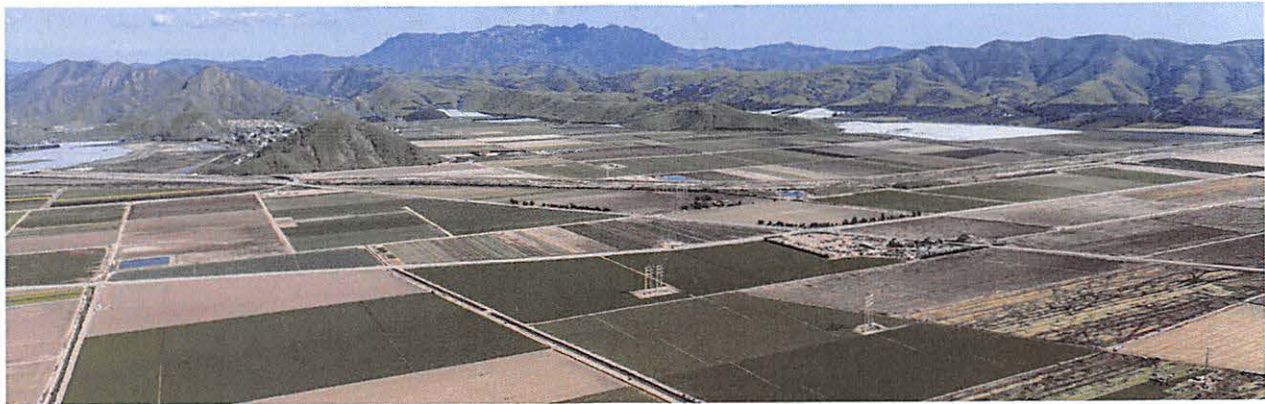
Thank you for your continued interest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vincent Battaglia".

Vincent Battaglia, MBA
Chairman of the Board

cc: Xavier Becerra, Attorney General
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One Farmer's Enormous Influence in the Imperial Valley

As reported in The Desert Sun on August 15, 2018, Imperial Valley farmer Mike Abatti wields considerable influence, with thousands of acres and crops worth more than \$10 million, according to Abatti.

His fields receive a lot of water from the Colorado River, in fact, for every thousand drops of water used by Nevada, California and Arizona, the paper reports he receives three and a half.

A former board member of the Imperial Irrigation District, with three of them self-described as his friends, Abatti has also now entered the energy industry, with millions of dollars worth of contracts from that same organization - Imperial Irrigation District, including one for a \$35-million dollar contract to build a giant battery. With no experience in the industry, he beat out several lower-cost bids. Currently, he's demanding millions for a battery facility expansion, with the threat to void the 20-year performance guarantee if he doesn't receive a new contract for operations and maintenance.

And if you've been paying attention, you know that his projects have all involved IID consultant Ziad Alaywan, of ZGlobal Inc. As reported by The Desert Sun, he has been accused of behind-the-scenes manipulations to benefit his own private-sector energy projects.

Other friends of Abatti's include district attorney Gilbert Otero, to whom Abatti's brother Jimmy gave thousands of dollars in campaign contributions, and Judge L. Brooks Anderholt, who has a long history of business and social ties with the family, who ruled in Abatti's favor in his water lawsuit against IID.

Read the complete Desert Sun story here:

<https://www.desertsun.com/in-depth/tech/science/energy/2018/08/01/california-desert-farm-baron-builds-water-and-energy-empire/636894002/>



If His family was Exempted, an Imperial Valley Farmer Leading the Charge was Willing to Drop a Lawsuit Over Water

Who should control the single largest share of water from the Colorado River in the west – Imperial Irrigation District Board Members or a few hundred farmers?

IID oversees 3.1 million acre-feet, as much as the states of Arizona and Nevada together. However, if demand exceeded supply, then IID would determine how much water each farmer would receive. A lawsuit was filed by Mike Abatti, challenging that plan, calling it an illegal power grab. An Abatti friend, Judge Anderholt, ruled in Abatti's favor. It's also been noted that the case was transferred to Anderholt with no reasonable explanation as to why, and many of Abatti's arguments that were not allowed by the previous judge were allowed back in. But the biggest and latest revelation is that Abatti offered to drop the lawsuit if an exemption was made for himself and his family.

IID is appealing the judge's decision, but in the meantime, millions of people get their drinking water from the Colorado River, which means the ruling can make it hard to avoid water shortages, as there is no jurisdiction over limiting supplies when needed. Others supporting the appeal include a vice president of a geothermal developer, union and university representatives and others, who argue that only allocating water as it has been done in the past means that new development is hamstrung, since there are no guarantees water will be available.

Read the complete Desert Sun story here:

<https://www.desertsun.com/story/news/environment/2018/08/15/california-farmer-imperial-valley-drop-colorado-river-lawsuit-exemption/957882002/>