

Testimony to San Antonio City Council
Linda Curtis, October 1, 2014

My name is Linda Curtis. I live in Bastrop. I am the volunteer Executive Director of the League of Independent Voters. My job is with a PAC in Austin called ChangeAustin.org.

I have a quick fact sheet for you that simply tells you that this very slow recharge aquifer – the Simsboro formation of the Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifer. It is a shared resource by folks in Lee, Bastrop, Burleson and Milam. It is also under siege by private marketers who are pushing similar mega-contracts. They are in lawsuits over their permits and one doesn't even have a customer.

You might have seen a picture being passed around by SAWS CEO Puente and water marketers of 6 Lee county landowners with a sign that says "Don't Come to Texas, Ain't No Water".

All we are saying is that we don't want our aquifer drained, and our futures ruined, to pay for out-of-control, in-migration growth to central Texas. Don't use *water* to *lure* people to Texas!

I want to make sure you know why the City of Austin has *not* bought into this so-called "deal of the century" pipeline.

In 2006, ChangeAustin.org began blowing the whistle on corporate giveaways to luxury shopping malls, to Formula 1 billionaires and the like. We realized that the biggest giveaways were really to the real estate lobby that continues to off-load the costs of out of control growth onto the backs of current residents.

Rents have doubled in Austin in 9 years. Property taxes are out the roof. Longtime residents are leaving at 30 a day, while 110 move in. We even commissioned our own studies to counter the claims about job growth with the growing unaffordability. We pled our case to the Austin City Council, and it fell on deaf ears.

Instead the Council bought in on the Chamber of Commerce's projects such as a \$500 million water treatment plant they may not need for 20 years. Now Austin ratepayers pay more for water the more they conserve. AND, in a two-week rush deal, they signed a \$2.3 billion contract for biomass energy because the Council believed the Chamber voices telling them they must move while the market was

right. Now, the biomass plant sits idle, Austin Energy is paying \$4 million per month for nothing and the city cannot get out of the contract!

In 2011, ChangeAustin.org led the petition drive to put 10 single-member districts on the ballot with the first independent citizens redistricting commission in Texas to draw the lines. Over 70 candidates are running this November and all of the leading candidates, including the likely next Mayor of Austin have agreed to refrain from forcing their rural neighbors to drain their aquifers to fuel out-of-control growth.

Please, take the time to understand what you're getting your citizens into and please hear the folks from across the region who will be affected too.

Thank you for your time. We're counting on you.