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**ASSEMBLY
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**PAUL COOK
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, 65TH DISTRICT**

March 12, 2012

League of California Cities
1400 K Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear League of California Cities:

I support strongly the application submitted by the City of Perris (City) for the Enchanted Heights Sewer Project. The City is applying for a Helen Putnam Award in the category of Enhancing Public Trust, Ethics, and Community Involvement for its innovative Bilingual Public Education and Participation Program. The Enchanted Heights Sewer Project has vastly improved the lives of the residents of Enchanted Heights, a disadvantaged community located in portions of the City and unincorporated Riverside County.

For many years, the residents of Enchanted Heights lived with contaminated run-off from deteriorated septic systems. This situation represented a critical public health issue. In 2011, the City partnered with the County of Riverside and Eastern Municipal Water District to find a solution to this problem. The City and its partners applied for and received \$15 million in grant funding to build a sanitary sewer system in the Enchanted Heights community.

As a condition of the grant, construction could not begin until all residents of Enchanted Heights signed a 'Right of Entry' form to allow the construction contractor to enter the properties of residents. Such a request was problematic due to the fact that residents of Enchanted Heights are largely Spanish-speaking immigrants. Despite this considerable obstacle, the City was able to move forward with the project by utilizing a community involvement program.

This community involvement program not only educated Enchanted Heights residents as to the need for the project, but it also explained the Right of Entry process in Spanish and English so that residents were able to make an informed decision. The program included four formal community meetings at the local elementary school, with over two hundred residents attending the meetings in total. At each meeting, bilingual notaries were provided so that residents would not have to pay any costs associated with notarizing the Right of Entry form.

The success of the City's community involvement program for this project is evident in the overwhelming community support for the sewer project. I truly believe that the public outreach effort for the Enchanted Height Sewer Project is a model for other agencies because of its success in engaging a disadvantaged community in a culturally appropriate manner. Again, I applaud the City and its partners for an innovative solution to a difficult problem.

Sincerely,

Paul Cook
Assemblyman, 65th District