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March 26, 2012

# California State Senate

SENATOR  
**BILL EMMERSON**

THIRTY-SEVENTH SENATE DISTRICT



League of California Cities  
1400 K Street, 4th Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: 2012 Helen Putnam Award for Excellence**

Dear League of California Cities:

I am writing to express my support for the City of Perris' Enchanted Heights Sewer Project application for the Helen Putnam Award in the category of Enhancing Public Trust, Ethics, and Community Involvement. The City's innovative Bilingual Public Education and Participation program has been crucial to the success of the sewer project and is worthy of recognition.

The Enchanted Heights Sewer Project is an outstanding example of how to solve a long-standing public health issue through both state and local agency partnering and the implementation of a community involvement program. For years, the residents of Enchanted Heights, a disadvantaged community, lived with contaminated run-off from failing septic systems. Many solutions were proposed over those years, but the lack of local funds to implement a sewer system was the limiting factor.

However, in 2011 the City of Perris along with the County of Riverside and Eastern Municipal Water District applied for and received \$15 million in grants from the Department of Public Health and the State Water Resources Control Board. These two agencies worked together to ensure sufficient funds were provided to not only build the sewer collection system, but also to decommission the septic tanks *at no cost* to the residents.

Furthermore, the residents of Enchanted Heights are largely Spanish-speaking immigrants. As a condition of the grants, the residents were required to sign a Right of Entry form to allow the construction contractor to enter the yards of the residents. Therefore, the City of Perris embarked on an extensive bilingual and culturally appropriate community involvement program. Through this program, formal community meetings were held at the local elementary school, bilingual notaries were provided at no charge to the residents to notarize the Right of Entry form, and follow-up visits to residents who were unable to attend the community meetings were conducted.

In closing, the City of Perris did an outstanding job reaching out to the community and its program is a model for other agencies to follow. I strongly urge your support of the Enchanted Heights' Sewer Project for the Helen Putnam Award of Excellence. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Emerson".

**BILL EMMERSON**  
Senator, 37<sup>th</sup> District

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