

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**June 15, 2026**

County of Kern Files Lawsuit Against City of Bakersfield Over Sewer Rate Increase

BAKERSFIELD, Calif.—The County of Kern today filed a lawsuit to challenge the City of Bakersfield’s unprecedented sewer rate hike. Despite numerous efforts to work collaboratively with the City to develop a more affordable and balanced solution for ratepayers, the County determined that legal action was necessary to advocate for rate relief for all Kern County residents.

The claim alleges that the City violated the California Constitution by including stormwater costs in the increased sewer rates. It also alleges that the City breached its agreement with the County for maintenance, transport, treatment, and disposal for a portion of the County Service Area for sewers, by using those fees for stormwater purposes.

On May 27, 2026, the City of Bakersfield City Council voted to increase sewer rates for Fiscal Years 2026-2027 through 2030-31. For a single-family home, the annual sewer service rate will increase 92%, from \$247 to \$475 the first year. The rate will then increase by \$100 each year for the next four years, resulting in a 354% increase over 5 years. The proposed options the County presented to the City, which included bonds, provide alternative pathways for the City to address infrastructure needs without overburdening ratepayers, a key priority for the County.

“Litigation is never our preferred course of action, but the County is committed to fighting to keep rates for this essential service affordable for our community,” said Supervisor Phillip Peters. “The City has a legitimate need to invest in repairing infrastructure, but ensuring costs remain reasonable should always be a central goal. We hope that the City will agree to further discussions with the County outside of the courtroom to find a way to resolve our differences for the good of the community.”

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