

December 9, 2019

Elaine M. Howle, California State Auditor
621 Capitol Mall, Suite 1200
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Ms. Howle:

Please audit West Covina. Many of us here in West Covina are alarmed at the way our city is handling its finances. The Sacramento Bee recently reported your office could audit cities that appeared on your "High Risk for Fiscal Distress" list. Our city, West Covina, is listed at #17 on the list. The article also accurately stated the city balanced its budget with layoffs. (*These are California's most financially strapped cities. Is Yours on the List?* October 24, 2019.)

Almost simultaneously to publication of the list, the West Covina City Council approved two memorandum of understandings (MOUs) with the police and firefighter associations that gives a 12 percent salary increase to police and fire personnel effective January 2020. These MOUs also commit our city to an additional 12% plus a retroactive raise (25 percent total) if the city receives additional general revenue in excess of \$3 million (fire) and \$4 million (police) and requires future pay scales be set in the top quadrant of designated cities—regardless of the city's fiscal situation.

In addition, the city's public safety unions are sponsoring a general sales tax increase that, if passed, replaces the Finance and Audit Committee with their own "oversight" committee. The "Audit Committee" was recommended by State Controller in 2015 and has been quite effective. This new "oversight" committee will consist of 3 elected officials, 2 union reps and only 4 independent citizens and will be controlled by the police union: Their initiative requires the union presidents approve changes to the oversight committee a city council may wish to make.

We believe the amount of salary increases and the commitment to future salary levels directly impacts "Future Pension Risk". West Covina was already ranked #1 worst in the state by your office for "Future Pension Risk". We do not want our city destroyed by this fiscal mismanagement.

When we residents express concerns to city officials on these issues, our concerns are dismissed or ignored. We could not just quietly sit by and watch, what the Sacramento Bee referred to as a "serious and pervasive deficiencies" continue in our city. We talked to our neighbors and ultimately prepared a petition requesting your office audit our city. In a very short period of time, interrupted by Thanksgiving holiday and rain, and without the use of social media publicizing our effort, 211 West Covina residents expressed their concern on our city's financial management by signing our petition. Please help us.

Sincerely,

On behalf of the attached petition signers,


Jerri Potras



Angie Gillingham


att: Resident Petition Requesting an Audit of the City of West Covina

cc: Honorable Susan Rubio, State Senator, District 22
Honorable Ling Ling Chang, State Senator, District 29
Honorable Blanca Rubio, State Assembly Member, District 48
Honorable Phillip Chen, State Assembly Member, District 55
Honorable Hilda Solis, Supervisor, Los Angeles County, First District
Betty T. Yee, California State Controller
Christopher Yee, San Gabriel Valley Tribune