



Commentary: Déjà Vu All Over Again With Metro East Sanitary District

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WOOD RIVER - As Yogi Berra would say, “It’s déjà vu all over again.”



Once more, we're looking at Metro East Sanitary District. Hans Brinker was a Dutch boy who saved his country by putting his finger in the dike. But MESD commissioners have their fingers in the cookie jar.

So what do they do? They don't remove their hand from the cookie jar. They run to Springfield and ask the Democrat super majority to make taking cookies OK.

Current law limits MESD commissioners' salaries to not exceed what county board members receive in Madison or St. Clair counties, whichever is less. (70 ILCS 2905/3-4) Madison County board members receive \$14,500/year, significantly less than St. Clair.

But in addition to their salary, they also receive health insurance, worth more than \$10,000/year — better insurance than is available to many in the private sector.

On April 26, Rep. Jay Hoffman, D - Belleville, sponsored HB 0476 that will allow MESD to pay for life, health, accident, hospital and medical insurance for employees and commissioners, but of course employees already receive health insurance.

On May 4, the bill unanimously passed the Illinois House.

On May 9, Senator Chris Bell, D - Belleville, became a sponsor.

It hasn't yet passed the Senate, but you know how quickly things can happen in Springfield.

Why do I say déjà vu?

I appointed Derrick Keith Cox and Justin Zimmerman to the Bi-State Board. They joined three board members appointed by St. Clair County, and five from Missouri. Cox and Zimmerman encouraged the Bi-State Board to stop voting in closed session. They also opposed Bi-State additional funding for the Delmar Loop Trolley boondoggle, and opposed Bi-State taking firearms away from security guards.

What happened next? In 2019, the Democrat-controlled General Assembly took one board seat away from Madison County and gave it to St. Clair.

Back to MESD. The MESD area flooded in April of 2017. The three MESD commissioners from Madison County stepped down, allowing me to appoint new board members. MESD was in bad shape, having lost \$8.5 million in the prior ten years. My new board turned things around — reversed over-charging by the Granite City Waste Water Treatment plant, cleaned ditches and automated the pumps and replaced patronage “pump watchers.”

No good deed goes unpunished. Also in 2019, the Democrat-dominated General Assembly took a board seat away from Madison County and gave it to the City of Granite City, putting MESD back under Democrat control.

I would ask that you contact your state senator to oppose this bill, because, simply, MESD commissioners are paid enough.

Kurt Prenzler, CPA

Madison County Board Chairman

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