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Water and water restrictions are much in the news today – from the drought in California to toxic coal-ash contamination in West Virginia. Working on the frontlines of water delivery and wastewater pollution control we know well what it takes to do the job, and tend to be more aware of the value of our product. Consumers (and managers) often don't – until you take it away.

We hear about California the most, but all of the western states are in a drought – we will have to learn better conservation, reclamation and reuse strategies. It is important that we are able to educate and serve our communities so that we have their support in 2017 and beyond. We need to support Board decisions that benefit our communities, and oppose purely revenue motivated decisions.

In West Virginia no less than three catastrophic spills have entered water ways and contaminated public water resources, rendering tap water unusable

(how do you shower with bottled water?). The spills are all related to coal power generation – either raw coal slurry with combustion chemicals or ash contaminated with heavy metals and radioactive isotopes – from profit hungry corporations that are more interested in short-term profit than long-term infrastructure re-investment.

For the District, infrastructure re-investment is a high priority; especially after a few years of deferred maintenance during the recession. Management and the Board of Directors are talking about ramping-up pipeline infrastructure renewal from 10 miles per year to 80 miles per year – a massive leap. We will soon learn how they propose to achieve this goal – certainly some aspects will be through contracting-out, which we must strongly oppose. Currently, pipeline relocations are being done by contractors, a practice 444 continues to oppose. We will continue to discuss these issues at our regular General Membership Meetings.

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We are saddened by the passing's of any of our members; two of which occurred this past month. One of young Danniell Cooper who, at just 28y.o., passed away in his sleep. He was an outstanding operator at SD-1 who had just completed his training program.

Always laughing (or sleeping, but never at work!) with a great sense of humor, honest and straightforward – never afraid to tell you what he thought or how he felt; he will be sorely missed.

Local 444 sadly informs Brother Reginald Moore has lost his battle with cancer and passed away at the age of 56. Unable to meet the physical demands of his job due to his illness Reggie retired early from the District with just under 19 yrs. of service. Although he chose to spend these years entirely within the Meter Reader Department his contributions reached well beyond.

From 2003-2007 he served two consecutive terms as President of Local 444. He also served as our Delegate to the Labor Councils, as an Executive Board Member of AFSCME Council 57 and most notably as the first African American elected to the Antioch City Council. But it was the time he spent as President I will remember him best for.

Only one year into his first term he challenged me to run for 2nd Vice President which was something I was nowhere near ready to pursue. I can't help but laugh when I look back on it now and realize what it took to persuade me. While the most respected veteran activists were telling me what they thought I needed to hear Reggie closed the deal by telling me exactly what I wanted to hear. Who knows he may have sincerely believed what he was selling me because he wasted no time (after I was elected) exposing me to the unfamiliar role of Union Activist.

He introduced me to everyone from Board Members to Council Delegates, International Executives even local politicians on the rise. He wouldn't let anyone walk passed us without introducing me first as his 2nd Vice President. He went out of his way to make me feel important always insisting that I was. He didn't just want me to acknowledge it he wanted me to wear it. I didn't understand all the fuss but Reggie knew no one would take me seriously in that role or any other unless I chose to take myself seriously. This wasn't exactly a natural act for me and if I'm really honest it's still something I have to work at today. But thanks to Reggie I got started sooner rather than later.

Over the three years that followed he would demonstrate the importance of building relationships, the benefits of listening and understanding opposing point of views and the rational to develop my social skills for something more than attention from girls. Without these contributions I'm not sure I'd be standing in the same spot today.....and for that I owe.

So I'll take this last opportunity to say on behalf of AFSCME Local 444 and from the current President to the former:

" THANK YOU REGGIE MOORE YOU WILL BE MISSED"

- John Briceno, President AFSCME Local 444