



October 9, 2018

The Honorable Chairman Brian Birdwell
Texas Sunset Advisory Commission
P.O. Box 13066
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Chairman Birdwell and members of the Sunset Advisory Commission,

San Antonio is one of the fastest growing cities in the country, and ensuring reliable water supplies is critical to maintaining that growth and our economy. The Edwards Aquifer is San Antonio's cornerstone water resource and it is critical that both groundwater quality and availability are effectively managed. Geologists are responsible for discovery, classification, and protection of geologic features associated with the Edwards Aquifer. This has a direct and fundamental effect on public safety for the 2 million residents of San Antonio and the surrounding area. As a result, San Antonio Water System relies on the expertise of geoscientists, both internally in our day-to-day operations, and externally with consultants and contractors. Hiring qualified geoscientists to ensure our water supply is crucial to our mission and the continued success of San Antonio.

Just as we hire professional engineers to do our engineering work, we hire professional geoscientists to do our hydrogeologic work. Hiring a licensed geoscientist gives us confidence that an individual has met the educational and experience requirements to be a practicing geoscientist. A licensed geoscientist's seal makes it clear to us who is responsible for the work and who we need to hold responsible for that work. Furthermore, if we are challenged in a legal proceeding, it's critical for us to have a licensed professional to represent and defend their work.

As a House member in 2001, I voted for Senate Bill 405 creating the Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists, a bill co-authored by Senator Jeff Wentworth of San Antonio. I felt that it was important to have qualified and credentialed professionals conducting work that affected public health and safety. Having been the President and CEO of one of the nation's largest utilities for the past 10 years, I understand more clearly the importance of using licensed professionals—their work not only affects health and human safety, but also the bottom line. We make billion-dollar infrastructure decisions that rely in large part on the work of licensed geoscientists.

As a benefactor of the work of licensed geoscientists, I encourage you and the commissioners to not sunset the Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists and the licensure of geoscientists. While I recognize the staff's concerns of grandfathering and exemptions, these are issues that are able to be addressed through negotiated legislative efforts. As well, the continued addition of new geoscientists in the future make this entity's work more and more important.

Thank you for your work in the Legislature and on the Sunset Commission and I applaud your consideration that our water supplies and our economy rely on the work of these qualified professionals.

Sincerely,



Robert R. Puente
President/CEO

cc: Rep. Chris Paddie, Vice Chair
Sen. Dawn Buckingham, M.D.
Sen. Bob Hall
Sen. Robert Nichols
Sen. Kirk Watson
Rep. Dan Flynn
Rep. Stan Lambert
Rep. Poncho Nevárez
Rep. Senfronia Thompson
Emily Pataki
Ronald G. Steinhart
Jennifer Jones, Acting Director