



TUWaterWays

Water News and More from the Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law & Policy

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Let's Take a Moment to Appreciate the Efficiency of the Binary

The yes/no. The good/bad. The hobbit/orc. The 1/0. Sure, in (good) storytelling we're taught that no one is all one thing or the other, but in laws and management, it sure makes things a lot easier and more efficient. Case in point, the Sewerage & Water Board of New Orleans (and the city's water infrastructure, too). What are we talking about? Well, it's a state-regulated entity that works entirely within the city, its funding comes via the New Orleans City Council, and its board is controlled by the mayor. So, is it a function of the city or of the state? Fish or fowl? Like [a capybara during Lent](#), it's hard to say.

"What's your point?" right? The point is that Louisiana's still-new-car-fresh governor, Jeff Landry, has had his eyes ([eye?](#)) on New Orleans [for a long time now](#). That has included [a special task force on SWBNO](#) that seems to be wrapping up and on its way to making reform recommendations.

Sure, they've found plenty of low-hanging fruit; yes, [trust IS essential](#). Beyond billing problems making personal enemies of many residents, [the trust-eroding problems of SWBNO are abundant](#). Of course, some have [trust issues with the task force itself](#). But there are much thornier issues as well. How to improve the governing structure and the rate-making decisions? Some friends have had ideas about this [for a while](#). There's the issue of [stormwater and drainage fees](#) and management. Again, it's something [some friends of ours have big ideas](#) about.

But perhaps the thorniest issues are those of funding and the awkward split in management of the drainage pipes themselves. For the pipes, it's doubtful that anyone still thinks it's a good idea for SWBNO to be responsible for pipes above a certain size and pipes below a certain size be the domain of the city's Department of Public Works (to be fair to both parties, it was a response to fill in the gaps after New Orleans's voters elected not to renew a tax in 1992). But the biggest thorn on the rose of the city's water infrastructure is how to pay for all of its needs in a city that has the same amount of infrastructure with many fewer rate payers than it once did. Some reading the tea leaves are [predicting the mucky-mucks are leaning towards privatization](#) of the utility.

Sometimes a private company running a public utility has worked out. It didn't in [Atlanta](#), and it hasn't [in the UK](#). But a great many people in the US do get their water from private for-profit utilities, and [sometimes even pay them to run them through their state taxes and not just their water bills!](#) Now, nothing about New Orleans' water is settled, and this could end up in many different arrangements. Everyone agrees changes need to be made, but one has to wonder [what kind of for-profit company](#) would even want to take on such a distressed asset as [New Orleans Sewerage & Water Board](#).

On this World Water Day, Spread a Little Peace

The United Nations has celebrated March 22 as World Water Day since 1993, with this year's theme being ["Water for Peace."](#) Now, water for war is easy. [It's a tale as old as time](#). And many are predicting [an uptick of water wars in coming decades](#). But for now, even just for today, use water for peace. Use it to avoid war. Maybe sign [a transboundary water agreement!](#)

Coming Up:

[Water Justice New Orleans District Town Halls](#);
March 21-April 3, 2024

[Coastal Law In Louisiana CLE](#); New Orleans, LA;
April 18-19, 2024

Water jobs:

[Environmental Reporter](#); The Times-Picayune | The Advocate; New Orleans, LA

[Gulf of Mexico Campaign Manager, Offshore Wind Energy](#); National Wildlife Federation; Gulf Region

[Communications Senior Coordinator](#); Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana; New Orleans



The [Tulane Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy](#) is a program of the Tulane University Law School. The Institute is dedicated to fostering a greater appreciation and understanding of the vital role that water plays in our society and of the importance of the legal and policy framework that shapes the uses and legal stewardship of water.

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