

Hicks-Ray Associates



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TO: WESTCAS Membership
FROM: Fred B. Hicks and Tom Ray
SUBJECT: History Lessons

As we move towards the November elections and contemplate the challenges for the future, it is instructive to look to the past for knowledge and also inspiration.

This week marks the 32nd anniversary of Jimmy Carter's vetoing of the FY79 Energy and Water Appropriations bill. This may appear to be irrelevant to WESTCAS members today, but it isn't for two very important reasons. First, this was an opening salvo largely directed at Western water projects. Although a bill was finally negotiated for FY79 funding, the impact of the Presidential veto on water projects in general and western water projects in particular, lingers into the present day.

In his veto message, President Carter mentions that Corps funding for FY79 was \$2.5 billion. Fast forward to FY11 and Corps funding is roughly \$5 billion. What percentage should this be if Corps funding had merely kept pace with inflation? We're not sure but it should certainly be way more than double the amount of the FY79 bill.

Another part of the Carter veto message is equally interesting: "By eliminating funding for the Water Resources Council, the bill would seriously impair efforts to better coordinate water resources programs. The Water Resources Council composed of all the agencies with water programs, is our best assurance of consistent and efficient implementation of water programs through the government and close working relationships with other level of government. The Administration's new water policy stresses the need for systematic management of water resource programs and for increased coordination with state and local governments....."

If this sounds familiar, this concept is very much alive and kicking in the Obama Administration although we won't see the creation of such a council in the 111th Congress.

The more things change, the more they stay the same. This is certainly true of the need to build infrastructure. What has changed is that our massive federal deficits threaten to rob the nation of the ability to address this challenge.

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