

Jackie Lacey

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NEWS RELEASE

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Water Official Pleads to Conflict of Interest

The treasurer of the West Basin Municipal Water District pleaded guilty today to charges that he embezzled nearly \$20,000 from the agency to pay for tennis and dance lessons for his children and repairs on his boat, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Ronald Craig Smith, 55, pleaded guilty to one count of conflict of interest before Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Thomas Sokolov. He was immediately sentenced to 180 days in county jail and placed on probation for five years.

As part of a negotiated plea, Smith submitted his resignation today to the West Basin Municipal Water District, and he turned over a \$10,000 check to the district as a partial repayment of the stolen funds. He was ordered to pay \$7,765 in remaining restitution to the water district.

Deputy District Attorney Alison M. Estrada with the Public Integrity Division prosecuted the case.

Arraignment for Smith's two co-defendants, Robert Earl Katherman Jr. (dob 6/22/46) and his wife, Marilyn Katherman (dob 11/11/48), was postponed to Oct. 1 in the same courtroom in case YA090605.

Smith admitted orchestrating a scheme to funnel money from the West Basin board to a nonprofit agency run by the Kathermans. Shortly after receiving the water basin's donations, the agency began writing checks on behalf of Smith and his family that covered school tuition for his son and two daughters along with a \$3,500 check that went to repair Smith's boat.

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About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to seeking justice for victims of crime and enhancing public safety. Last year, the [Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#) prosecuted more than 73,000 felony defendants and 113,000 misdemeanor defendants.