

Calif. Supreme Court won't budge on water rates

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

In a setback to California water regulators' conservation efforts, the state Supreme Court has kept intact a ruling that makes it harder for municipalities to impose tiered pricing to discourage heavy water use.

The state's high court upheld a closely watched ruling involving the Orange County city of San Juan Capistrano, rejecting pleas from California water regulators. Gov. Jerry Brown, who has ordered a 25 percent cutback in urban water use, had said the ruling represents a potential "straitjacket" for regulators.

In April, the 4th District Court of Appeal struck down a water-pricing system used by San Juan Capistrano that charged customers considerably more per-gallon for heavier water use. The court said the structure violated Proposition 218, a 1996 statewide ballot measure that said municipalities can't charge fees that exceed the cost of providing a service.

Read the whole story