BOARD MEETING DATE: November 6, 2026 AGENDA NO. 12

PROPOSAL: Amend Contracts for Legislative Representation in Washington, D.C.

SYNOPSIS: The current contracts for legislative and regulatory representation in Washington D.C. with Kadesh & Associates, LLC and Cassidy & Associates, Inc. expire on January 14, 2027. Each of these contracts includes an option for two one-year extensions. This action is to approve the second one-year extension of the existing contracts for Calendar Year 2027 with Kadesh & Associates, LLC for $247,029 and Cassidy & Associates for $240,000 as South Coast AQMD's legislative and regulatory representatives in Washington D.C., to further the agency's policy positions at the federal level. Sufficient funding is available in the Legislative, Public Affairs & Media FY 2026-27 Budget.

COMMITTEE: Legislative, October 9, 2026; Recommended for Approval

RECOMMENDED ACTION:
Authorize the Chair to execute contract extensions with Kadesh & Associates, LLC for $247,029 and Cassidy & Associates, Inc. for $240,000, for legislative consulting services in Washington, D.C. for one year beginning on January 15, 2027.

Wayne Nastri
Executive Officer

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Background
In 2024, the Board selected Kadesh & Associates, LLC (Kadesh) and Cassidy & Associates, Inc. (Cassidy) for legislative and regulatory representation in Washington, D.C. for one year beginning on January 15, 2025, with an option for up to two one-year renewals upon satisfactory performance, at the Board's discretion. The two one-year contracts will expire on January 14, 2027; however, each agreement includes an option for one additional one-year extension.

In 2026, the firms of Kadesh and Cassidy represented South Coast AQMD in Washington, D.C. and performed at a high professional level. The firms have been effective in working with the Governing Board and staff to sustain active engagement

in federal legislative, policy and regulatory issues with the Administration, Congressional Members and staff, industry, environmental and health organizations and other stakeholders in a manner that facilitates South Coast AQMD's policy priorities.

Kadesh is a bipartisan federal advocacy firm specializing in California interests. Kadesh's team has considerable experience working as senior Congressional staffers in the House and the Senate. Mark Kadesh, President, is the primary contact with Ben Miller, Principal Consultant, for South Coast AQMD. Mr. Kadesh has extensive legislative and political experience and insights gained from his sixteen years working on Capitol Hill. Mr. Miller worked for more than seventeen years as an advisor for Members of the California Congressional Delegation. Kadesh also supports South Coast AQMD with specialized expertise in Appropriations.

Cassidy is a bipartisan federal government relations firm with more than 45 years of demonstrated experience. Jed Dearborn, Executive Vice President, serves as South Coast AQMD's primary representatives. Mr. Dearborn served as Senior Counsel to the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Additionally, Cassidy has assigned their Energy & Environment Team including three Senior Vice Presidents with federal experience in these issues.

While the 119th Congress is still in progress, below are some issues the consultants have worked on:

- **INVEST CLEAN Program –** Protect South Coast AQMD's nearly $500 million INVEST CLEAN grant awarded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA). This educational effort is critical to ensure these funds are not rescinded through budget or other legislation like other clean technology programs such as the National Electrical Vehicle Infrastructure program. Additionally, the grant helps build relationships with Members by highlighting how INVEST CLEAN drives the transition to zero-emission goods movement in Southern California to improve air quality, boost economic development, and strengthen the workforce.

- **Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 Appropriations** – While the House FY 2027 Appropriations bill for Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies included a 20-percent (approximately $1.8 billion) cut. The three programs related to South Coast AQMD were maintained at 2026 levels of: $67.8 million for Targeted Airshed Grants; $90 million for the Diesel Emission Reduction Act; and $236.7 million for Section 103/105 to support air agencies. The Senate has not yet completed their Appropriations bills and the federal government is currently operating on a continuing resolution until December 11, 2026.

- **FY2023 Congressionally Directed Spending Funding for the "Zero Emissions Fuel Cell Locomotive" Project --** South Coast AQMD received a

Congressionally Directed Spending request for $500,000 through Senator Alex Padilla in FY 2023. South Coast AQMD's partner was unable to move forward with the project funded through the U.S. Department of Energy. Consultants are working with Senator Padilla and Committee staff to seek a technical correction to change the project title from "Zero Emissions Fuel Cell Locomotive" to the "Innovative Energy Demonstration Project."

Additionally, our consultants are consistently educating our Congressional Delegation and other Members, Committee staff, agencies, and other stakeholders on South Coast AQMD nonattainment issues to maintain and develop partners to advocate for air quality. Recently, our firms have supported South Coast AQMD's efforts to oppose revocation of six additional California Waivers for CARB regulations including At Berth and Harbor Craft. Through working with the Governor's office, CARB, environmental organizations and labor, all Democratic House Members of the California Delegation opposed revoking the California Waivers. This issue is now pending in the Senate.

The consultants have represented South Coast AQMD well through their advocacy efforts. Continued representation in Washington, D.C. is necessary to further the agency's legislative, regulatory and policy objectives. The South Coast and Coachella Valley Air Basins nonattainment status and the threat of Clean Air Act sanctions require substantial, consistent engagement with Congress and the Administration.

In 2027, South Coast AQMD advocacy will continue to focus on non-attainment issues, funding, regulations, and policies to address emissions from heavy-duty trucks, ocean-going vessels, locomotives, aircraft, and off-road equipment. Additional areas of interest are energy, infrastructure, residential and commercial building efficiencies, disadvantaged communities air monitoring and related programs. The consulting firms will also assist South Coast AQMD to advocate for favorable program guidance and/or funding for existing and future grant programs.

Proposal

Staff recommends retaining Kadesh & Associates, LLC and Cassidy & Associates, Inc. for Calendar Year 2027, given their successful efforts in 2026 and their ability to build upon these efforts in the coming year. Continuity of representation is critical to strategically advocate with pending nonattainment and Clean Air Act issues.

Pursuant to the original contract, the Board has discretion to exercise options for the two one-year extensions. This proposal is to approve the second one-year extension for the two consulting contracts.

Resource Impacts

The Legislative, Public Affairs, and Media Budget for FY 2026-27 has sufficient funds for legislative advocacy in Washington D.C.