

## **\$3 for Bottles of Water, Paid by City, Is Called a Rip-Off**

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**L.A. ran up a \$62,000 tab for refreshments in holding an event for 1,200 residents at the Convention Center, Councilman Zine says.**

ANGELES

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The city is running up exorbitant bills for refreshments provided at city-sponsored events, according to Councilman Dennis Zine, who said it is hard to swallow that Los Angeles paid \$3 each for half-liter bottles of water for hundreds of people at a gathering earlier this year.

"A rip-off" is how Zine described a \$62,000 refreshments bill for a Congress of Neighborhoods meeting hosted by the city in April for 1,200 residents at the Convention Center.

The councilman said Friday that he paid \$1.19 for a bottle of Perrier water that was the same size as the bottle purchased by the city for \$3 from city concessionaire Aramark at the Convention Center.

Zine also complained that the taxpayers were paying \$15.95 per person for continental breakfasts provided at the April meeting, and \$18.50 for box lunches.

Faced with Zine's complaint, the head of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment told the City Council that he trimmed spending so the refreshment bill for a similar meeting today is \$8,000, with only breakfast served.

Greg Nelson also said he got Sparkletts to provide the water for today's event for 22 cents a bottle.

Councilman Tom LaBonge wondered why taxpayers are being tapped to buy bottled water when the city has long touted the quality of water provided by the city Department of Water and Power.

"What you really should do is go to Water and Power and get the water for free," LaBonge said.

"I believe they should be bottling their water and providing it," he said.