



# Proposed Utility Billing Improvements



February 12, 2013

**Presented by:**

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# Purpose

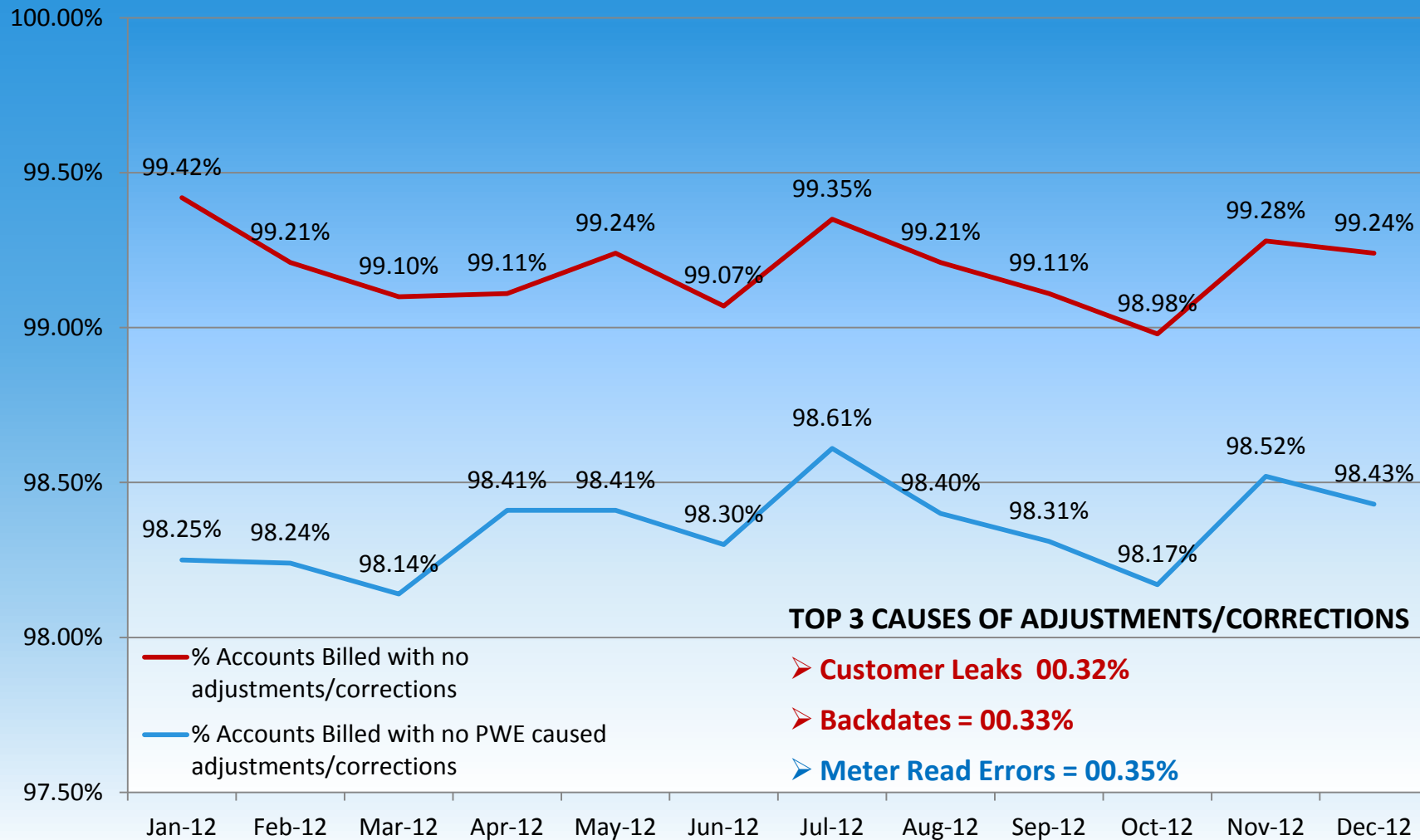
Inform Committee on proposed revision to Chapter 47 which would:

1. Add additional exceptional circumstance adjustment for some customer classes
2. Establish a Water Review Board to provide an additional level of review for customer issues.

# Utility Customer Service Overview

- Billing and collections arm of the largest water / wastewater utility in Texas
- Annual operating budget of \$30.5 million, FY13
- Generates in excess of \$900 million in revenue annually
- Over 465,000 meters: 440,000 bills mailed or emailed monthly, serving 2.1 million residents
- 40-50,000 calls received monthly in the Contact Center

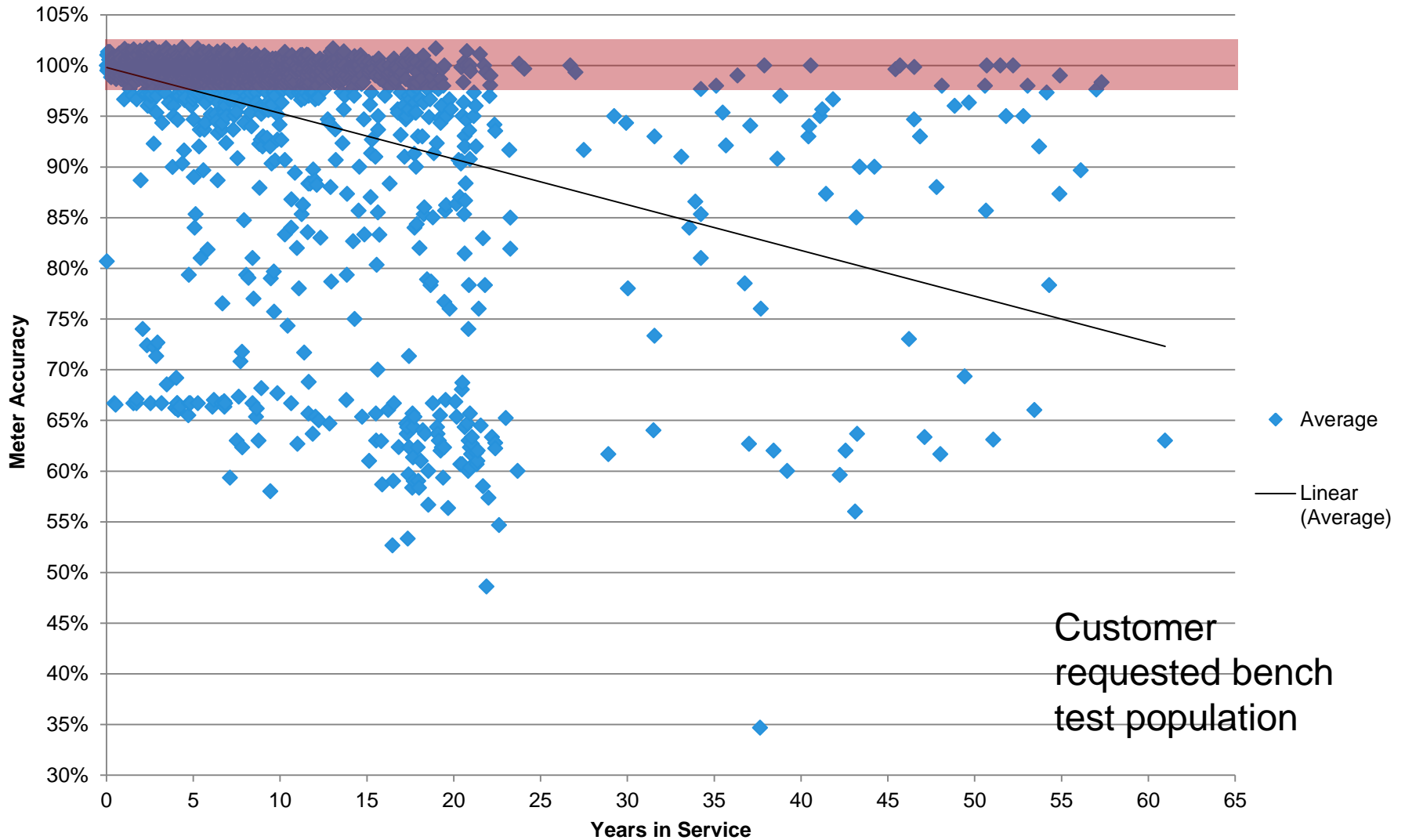
# UCS Billing Account Accuracy



# High Consumption - Leading Causes

<b>1. Leaking Toilet</b>	@ ½ gallon per minute 21,600 gallons per month Can be much higher	\$287.14 extra
<b>2. Irrigation System Leak</b>	@ 1 gallon per minute 43,200 gallons per month	\$577.15 extra
<b>3. Watering Garden/Grass</b>	@ 5 gallons per minute, 2 hours per day 18,000 per month	\$240.24 extra
<b>4. Hose Left on – 1 Night</b>	@ 5 gallons per minute for 9 hours 2,700 in one night	\$27.57 extra
<b>5. Pool Fill</b>	20,000 gallons (varies from 10,000 to 30,000+)	\$259.52 extra
<b>6. Private Line Break – 1 week</b>	@ 7.5 gallons per minute, 75,600 per week	\$1,034.20 extra
<b>7. Private Line Break – 1 month</b>	@ 7.5 gallons per minute, 324,000 per month	\$4,466.00 extra

# METER ACCURACY TESTS (5/8-2") – SCATTERPLOT



# Current Customer Issue

# Review Process

If customer is not satisfied with the Administrative Review finding, they have 10 days to request an Administrative Hearing before an independent hearing examiner.

**Administrative Hearing**

If customer is dissatisfied with outcome of initial investigation, a subsequent field investigation will determine approval or denial. The Administrative Review generally occurs within 90 days of the bill in question.

**Administrative Review**

Contact Center, Service Requests, correspondence, emails, web chats  
All cases are tracked from intake to resolution. Up to one billing cycle to approve or deny based upon investigation.

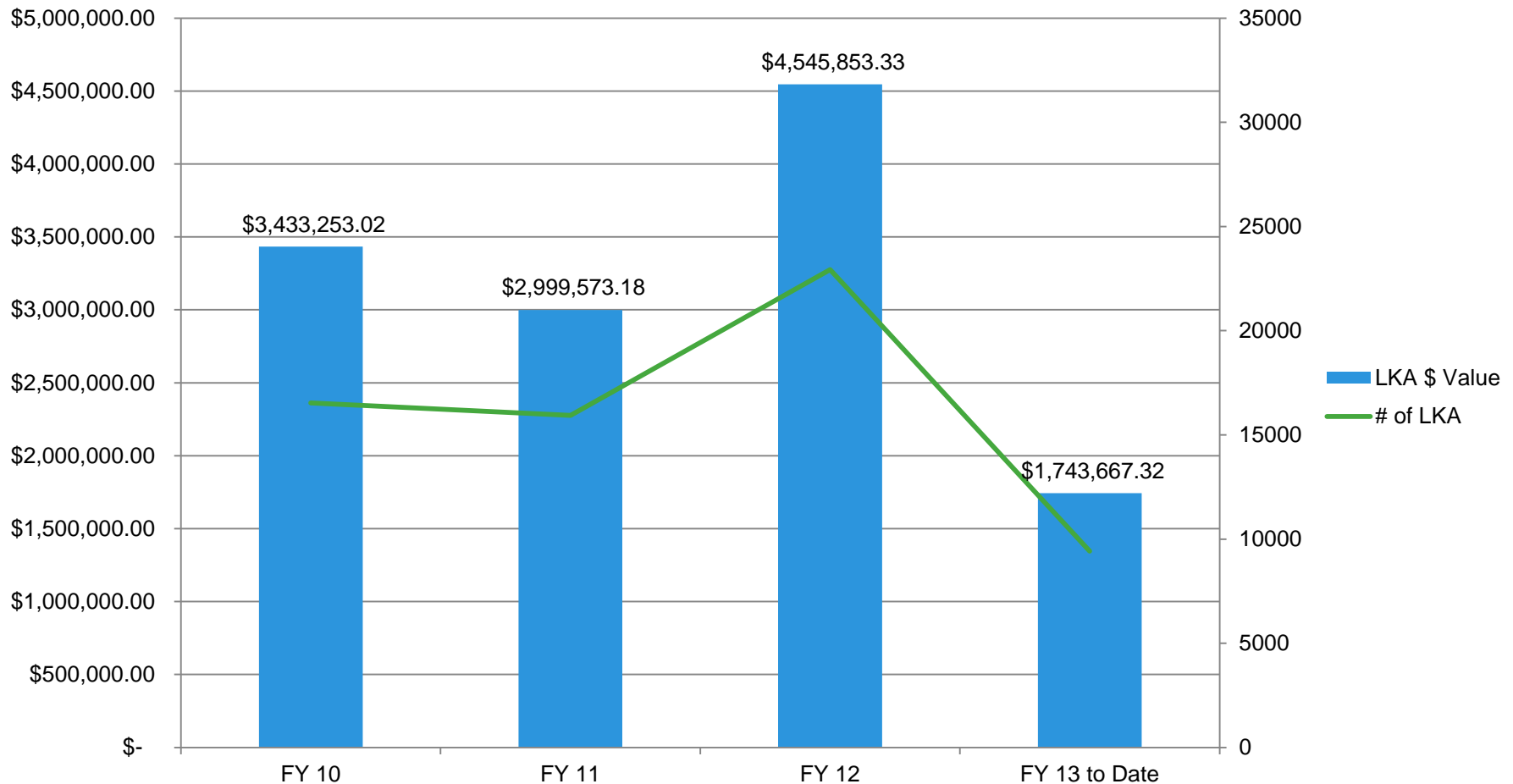
**Customer Service Intake**

# Adjustments Available to Customers Now

Type	Who's Eligible	Eligible Refund
Leak Adjustments (LKAs)	Any account where a customer has a leak on customer's side, customer discovers and repairs leak, and seeks a reduction in the bill. (1 per 12 months)	Customer pays established average consumption plus one half of the excess charges resulting from leak.
Unusually Large Bill Adjustments (ULBs)	Any single-family residential customer whose bill is inexplicably more than 200% greater than their average usage (1 per 12 months)	Customer only pays 200% of their average consumption.



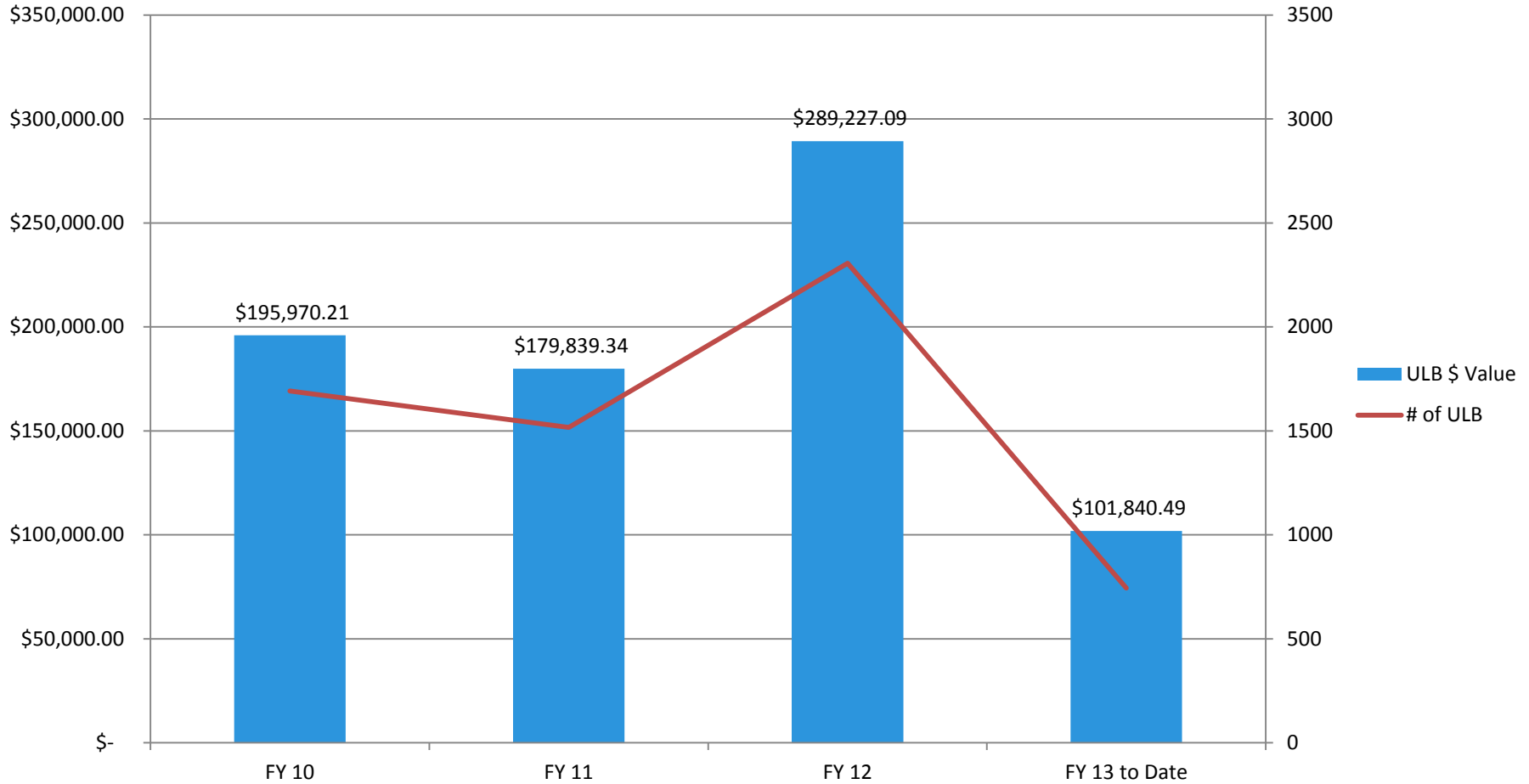
# Leak Adjustments Applied



Note: In FY 2012 we experienced the most severe months of the citywide drought which increased leaks.

Update as of Jan 31<sup>st</sup>

# Unusually Large Bill Adjustments Applied



Note: In FY 2012 we experienced the most severe months of the citywide drought which increased water usage, leading to more unusual circumstances occurring.

Update as of Jan 31<sup>st</sup>

# Proposed Exceptional Circumstances Adjustment

- An adjustment may be made to a single family residential, multi-family residential, or not-for profit account up to \$4,000 for one occurrence (not to exceed a two month timeframe)
  - The usage must be higher than five times the customer's monthly average
  - Evidence of an investigation (section 47-5) must show that the increased usage was not the result of the customer's failure to take action to address the problem
- Adjustment will be calculated using as the gross quantity 500% of the customer's average monthly usage
- A customer may receive no more than one of these adjustments in a 24-month period
- This adjustment may not be combined with any other adjustment for a single incident
- Review of financial impact in one year's time

# Water Adjustment Board

- Three members appointed by the Mayor and approved by City Council
  - One member must hold a master plumber's license
- Has jurisdiction over appeals of leak adjustments, ULBs, and exceptional circumstances
- Hears appeals of decisions of administrative hearings, based on the record of those hearings
- Appointed board may uphold, reverse or modify the decision of the hearing examiner in conformity with provisions of chapter 47

# Customers Have the Technology

- In addition to the current remedies and proposed new remedies (exceptional circumstances and water adjustment board), customers can use the following methods to keep up with their water usage:
  - Customers may sign up for alerts via text or email
  - Customers may monitor water usage online
  - Customers may download an app on a smart phone to monitor water usage/receive alerts

# Questions?