

RESOLUTION NO. 2271-08

**A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL
OF THE TOWN OF WINDSOR SUPPORTING REFORM OF THE BOND RATING
SYSTEM TO ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MUNICIPAL BONDS**

WHEREAS, the recent turmoil in the municipal bond markets has brought into focus the higher standards imposed by the three major bond rating agencies in rating municipal bonds compared to corporate bonds, mortgage-backed securities and other debt instruments; and

WHEREAS, issuers of municipal bonds rarely default on the bonds they sell to finance streets and roads, public buildings, bridges, flood protection and water systems, and other critical infrastructure, yet municipal bond ratings fail to reflect that fundamental fact; and

WHEREAS, the rating agencies even acknowledge this disparity, but they ignore it in their ratings. Standard & Poor's, for example, acknowledges that the historic rate of defaults of A-rated municipal bonds is 0.23 percent, while that of corporate bonds is 2.91 percent - or 13 times greater; and

WHEREAS, despite the relative default rates shown by their own data, the rating agencies continue to discriminate against municipal issuers, requiring public agencies to secure expensive bond insurance in order to secure bond ratings comparable to those of private corporations; and

WHEREAS, the rating agencies base their ratings of corporate bonds on the risk the issuer will default. Their ratings of municipal bonds, in contrast, have little relationship to the risk of default. This difference provides a substantial economic benefit at the expense of taxpayers across the nation; and

WHEREAS, a coalition of state and local public agencies, led by California State Treasurer Bill Lockyer, has called on the three major rating agencies to examine their practices and treat municipal bonds on par with corporate bonds that expose investors to the same level of risk. The Treasurer also testified before the House Financial Services Committee on March 12 about the need for reform.

WHEREAS, the response by the rating agencies to the call for reform has been uneven. Moody's has taken the greatest strides, announcing it will assign a corporate-equivalency rating (what it calls a global scale rating or GSR) alongside the traditional municipal rating to any municipal bond at the issuer's request; and

WHEREAS, the current double-standard by rating agencies: (1) drains billions of dollars from taxpayers' pockets in the form of unfairly high interest rates; (2) forces taxpayers to pay even more money to buy bond insurance – insurance they would not have to purchase if municipal bond ratings accurately reflected the slight risk of default; (3) misleads investors by grossly inflating the risk of buying municipal bonds; and (4) undermines the effective functioning of a transparent market.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Town Council of the Town of Windsor, California that it calls on the major municipal bond agencies to end the double standard in the treatment of municipal and corporate bonds; to treat taxpayers the same as corporations and rate municipal bonds based on the risk of default; and to create a unified, global rating approach that treats all issuers equally, and better serves taxpayers and investors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town Manager is hereby directed to notify the municipal bond rating agencies by letter of the adoption of this resolution, with a copy to California State Treasurer Bill Lockyer and to register the Town as a member of the coalition of public agencies supporting the nationwide effort to reform how bond rating agencies grade state and local bonds.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 7th day of May 2008 by the following vote:

AYES:	COUNCILMEMBERS ALLEN, GOBLE, PARKER, SALMON AND MAYOR FUDGE
NOES:	NONE
ABSTAIN:	NONE
ABSENT:	NONE


DEBORA FUDGE, MAYOR

ATTEST:


MARIA DE LA O, TOWN CLERK