

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPUBLICANS

CONGRESSMAN DOC HASTINGS, RANKING MEMBER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Thursday, October 15, 2009

CONTACT: [Emily Lawrimore](#) or [Jill Strait](#)  
202-226-2311

## Hastings Opposes Democrat Leaders' Misplaced Priorities, Calls for Relief for San Joaquin Valley Farmers and Families

*"If the House is going to provide authorization to spend tens of millions of taxpayer dollars to provide recycled water to the San Francisco Bay area, then this House should also be voting on legislation that brings relief to Californians suffering from this devastating man-made drought."*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Today, House Natural Resources Committee Ranking Member Doc Hastings (WA-04) delivered the following speech regarding the Bay Area Regional Water Program Recycling Act of 2009 (H.R. 2442). While Ranking Member Hastings supports water recycling, he believes that Democrat Congressional leaders should use this bill to also deliver immediate relief to California's San Joaquin Valley where 40,000 people are unemployed due to a man-made, regulatory drought. Unfortunately, Democrat Leaders did not allow a single amendment to be offered to help farmers in the San Joaquin Valley. Full video and text of the speech follows:



[Click HERE to watch the floor speech](#)

"Mr. Speaker, I rise to reluctantly oppose this bill.

I, and my colleagues on this side of the aisle, do support water recycling as one of the tools for providing water to farmers and communities – just as water storage is one of these tools.

The Democrat sponsor of this legislation, and the Democrat manager of this bill, is correct that Republican water recycling bills have passed this House. The question is asked, why is this bill different?

The answer is very simple.

When there is an economic disaster occurring in the San Joaquin Valley of California... when a man-made and government-enforced drought has dried up farm after farm... with 40,000 workers unemployed, standing in food lines, and being ignored by the Democrat leadership of this Congress... when solutions to bring water and relief to this area are blocked and stymied by the Democrat leadership of this House,... then a point comes when Members have to say enough is enough.

The water recycling bill before us benefits the San Francisco Bay Area. The Speaker of the House represents the City of San Francisco, and among her top deputies is the sponsor of this legislation, also from the Bay Area.

The bill provides millions in federal taxpayer dollars for the Bay Area...all while tens of thousands of their fellow citizens suffer economic devastation just a few hours south in the San Joaquin Valley.

All that was sought by two Republican Members from the San Joaquin Valley, with the expressed support of their Democrat colleague from the same area of California, was to have a chance to make their case on the House floor and to vote on a solution to this disaster.

They didn't ask for a guarantee of victory. They just asked for the ability to be heard and have the U.S. House of Representatives vote on their proposals.

That chance has been denied.

It's been blocked.

It's been deemed non-germane.

It's been labeled as irrelevant to the bill before us.

Mr. Speaker, might does not make right when it comes to who controls this House... and what they are unwilling to do would help tens of thousands suffering as a result of lawsuits and the policies and actions of the federal government.

It's been stated that the drought disaster is a California issue. The implication is that it is not of concern to other Americans. This is simply wrong.

What is happening in the San Joaquin Valley of California does affect all Americans. If this water recycling bill to benefit the Bay Area is worthy of consideration by the Representatives of all fifty states here in the House,... then so is the drought disaster.

If this can happen in California, then what of the farmers in the San Joaquin Washington state district that I represent? Hundreds of thousands of acres of farmland are irrigated with water delivered by federal pumps and from federal reservoirs.

I do not ever want to see the day that a government-enforced drought devastates the communities that I represent.

This isn't the first instance when federal policies have threatened to cut off water to tens of thousands.

Earlier this decade, the City of Albuquerque was threatened with the loss of its water supply due to the presence of the silvery minnow. Congress acted to provide relief to New Mexico when the House and Senate, in a bipartisan way, voted for a remedy.

Today, no relief comes to the San Joaquin Valley of California as it did to the people of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

The relief that is sought is not a bailout. It's not a plea for money or stimulus funding. The relief they seek simply involves action by the federal government to let water flow to the farmers of this fertile valley, rather than letting it run out to sea.

If the House is going to provide authorization to spend tens of millions of taxpayer dollars to provide recycled water to the San Francisco Bay area, then this House should also be voting on legislation that brings relief to Californians suffering from this devastating man-made drought.

So, Mr. Speaker, on these grounds, I urge a no vote on this bill."

### **[Background on California's Man-Made Drought](#)**

- California's water storage and transportation system includes 1,200 miles of canals and nearly 50 reservoirs that provide water to 23 million people and irrigate four million acres of land throughout the state.
- In May 2007, a Federal District Court Judge ruled that increased amounts of water had to be re-allocated towards protecting the Delta smelt – a three-inch fish on the Endangered Species List.
- Because of this ruling, more than 150 billion gallons of water this year alone will be diverted away from farmers in the San Joaquin Valley and into the San Francisco Bay – eventually going out into the Pacific Ocean.
- For the first time ever, farmers on the west-side of the San Joaquin Valley were told they would receive 0% water allocation from the Bureau of Reclamation for their crops this season. That number was subsequently increased to a mere 10%.
- The lack of water has caused 500,000 acres of farm land to dry up – a land mass equivalent to the size of the State of Rhode Island. Also, according to a May 2009

report by U.C. Davis, the water restrictions have left nearly 40,000 people unemployed.

- The Central Valley town of Mendota, which recently had to turn away unemployed farm families from food lines, is currently experiencing a 40% unemployment rate.
- Because California is the number one agricultural producer in the United States, no water means a smaller food supply, higher food prices nationwide, and increased reliance on foreign food sources.
- There is no proof that this water loss to the ocean will actually benefit the Delta smelt. And despite calls for help from Republicans, Chairman Rahall and Speaker Pelosi refuse to temporarily suspend portions of the Endangered Species Act, as they consented for the snail darter in Tennessee and the silvery minnow in New Mexico, in order to return the flow of water to the farmers in the San Joaquin Valley. Furthermore, the Obama Administration continues to turn down California's requests for emergency assistance.

# # #