Statement of

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Ranking Member Bentz, Congressman Obernolte, distinguished Members of the Committee, my name is Brett Barbre and I am the General Manager of the Yorba Linda Water District. I was privileged to spend over 22 years as an elected Water Board Member in Southern California, including spending over 10 years on the Board of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD). Due to the lack of resolution on Western Water Issues, there has been a significant impact on the Southern California Water Community.

We have a water system in California that is broken under the weight of environmental problems and regulations, lack of investment and outright political obstructionism. The California water system has been living off the investments of past generations, and the bill of inaction is coming due.

There have been significant investments over the past generation at the local level, most notably in Southern California within the MWD service area. But statewide the system is largely the same one we had more than a generation ago even though the state population has more than doubled. Keep in mind that the planning for the State Water Project began in 1956 and the first deliveries to Southern California occurred in 1971 – 50 years ago.

As a representative of an agency that receives water from both the Colorado River and the California State Water Project, it is fair to compare and contrast the experience on both systems.

While the California system has four times the flows of the Colorado River, it has less than half the storage. This disparity has significant and demonstrable impacts. The Colorado system has essentially been in drought conditions this entire century yet the system has gone for more than 15 years without any shortage conditions because its storage system can hold four times the average runoff of the basin. When big storms have occurred this century on the Colorado, the system can capture every drop. However, when big storms happen in Northern California, we

have seen up to 80 to 90 percent of the water coming into the Delta going out to the ocean – not exactly a "beneficial use" of fresh water.

What we need in California is a new generation of investment and a new management ethic that doesn't look for reasons to deny water for the economy of for regional political advantage.

The design of the water system in the Delta needs to be improved so that water can be captured in the northern Delta and transported to the aqueduct system in the southern Delta. We must remember that this supply is vital for the economies of the Silicon Valley, the Central Valley and $1 trillion Southern California economy.

In 1977, which was the driest year on record, the State Water Project was able to deliver 400,000 acre feet (af) of water to MWD; in 2021 we will receive 100,000 af. We seem to be going backwards. Across the state we need more storage, north of the Delta and south of the Delta. Storing water away in the wet years means more for both the economy and the environment in dry years. We have long tried to run this water system with inadequate storage and the problem reveals itself every time it stops raining. We need to stop fooling ourselves that we can be the 7th largest economy in the world without a world class water system that is up to today's challenges.

As a result of inaction at the state level, the regional water community has stepped up to compensate for the failure of leadership in California.

The MWD has invested in local storage, both surface and groundwater storage.

Southern California has seen the construction of a desalination (de-sal) plant in Carlsbad through Poseidon Resources for the San Diego County Water Authority, and there are plans moving forward, slowly, through the vast regulatory process, for de-sal plants in Dana Point and Huntington Beach.

In Orange County, we have developed the Groundwater Replenishment System, a joint venture between the Orange County Sanitation District and the Orange County Water District. This project treats sewer flows to potable drinking water standards, and pumps it up to the Santa Ana River spreading basins to allow it to percolate back into the local groundwater aquifers.

Southern California is also home to significant wildfires and we have responded at the local level as well.

My water district ranges in elevation between 250 feet and 1,390 feet, which requires a reliable supply of power to move the water throughout our service area. In addition, the eastern and northern boundaries of our District are considered a Wildland Urban Interface area, which simply means the Chino Hills State Park borders our District and experiences high burn rates during Santa Ana Wind conditions.

The Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) during fires is deleterious to the ability to move water into the higher areas of our District. As a District with 14 reservoirs and 12 Booster Pump Stations, we have installed back-up Natural Gas Generators to ensure we can continue to provide water during electric power shut-offs. You can't fight fires without water, and we can't move water without Natural Gas! That is why it is critical to have a network of back-up generators to keep the water flowing.

Finally, in order to be responsive to the fire fighters, we have installed the world's first heli-hydrant, which is a radio controlled water tank for firefighting helicopters to fill up in urban areas for water drops. It is located on one of our reservoirs which allows for immediate drops in both residential and wildland areas such as state and national parks. I have included a quick video on our first heli-hydrant. Please note that our second is currently under construction and will be available for the fall fire season.

This concludes my statement and will be happy to respond to any questions.

Thank you.