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YEARS
1917 - 2017

TULARE COUNTY FARM BUREAU

Mission: to promote and enhance the viability of Tulare County agriculture.

January 13, 2017

The Honorable David G. Valadao
1728 Longworth Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Valadao,

On behalf of the Tulare County Farm Bureau and its 2,000 farm and ranch families we represent, we are encouraged and in support of your efforts to introduce new drought relief legislation in the House of Representatives. We support your introduction of H.R. 23, Gaining Responsibility On Water (GROW) Act of 2017.

Thank you for your important and critical work in developing a new water bill for Congress to address California's Central Valley, which provides the majority of fruits and vegetables for the country, has been suffering from a drought, which has only been made worse by federal regulations. As a result, over 300 billion gallons of water have been diverted away from the region in an effort to protect the Delta Smelt. Today, citizens and farmers in the Central Valley are receiving less water, if any at all, than they previously contracted for and purchased. The water system that established California as a beacon of ingenuity has been pushed to the wayside for a bait fish and has had devastating consequences for farmers, as they now fallow thousands of acres of farmland. Cities in the Central Valley have run dry, relying solely on trucks to deliver potable water.

For years, you have fought to bring water back to the valley; this year is no different. This bill would ensure reliable water deliveries for our valley, secure private property and senior water rights, and save millions of dollars by ending wasteful protectionist plans. The bill also requires regulators to substantiate claims with scientific evidence. To ensure water reliability in the future, the bill obligates the federal government to complete feasibility studies for multiple water storage projects in California and increases the scope of investigation for dam safety throughout the West, including expansion.

Something must be done in response to the drought crisis and we are hopeful this legislation is the next step to addressing the water supply challenges we face. We look forward to working with you on advancing H.R. 23. Tulare County Farm Bureau continues to remain very concerned about water reliability in the San Joaquin Valley and throughout California and supports the efforts of our members of Congress to address immediate concerns for water reliability and develop a solution that can respond to our urgent and dire situation and develop comprehensive long term solutions. We thank Congressman Valadao for introducing H.R. 23.

The Valley's economy depends on healthy rural communities that can provide safe and reliable water supplies to their residents. These residents fuel the economy in the Valley by contributing to the agricultural workforce and beyond. The bill must address storage and short term relief in the immediate future, and long term solutions for more above ground storage infrastructure and less environmental restriction.

A comprehensive solution should including the following key provisions:

In the Short Term,

- Immediate relief from the Endangered Species Act
- Resume pumping at the Tracy pumps and operate the State Water Project and Central Valley Project with maximum discretion and flexibility
- Cessation of restoration flows on the San Joaquin River until such a time as the necessary improvements have been completed and surplus water exists beyond the needs of communities and industry

In the Long Term,

- Increase storage capacity within our existing reservoir systems
- Construct new reservoirs throughout the entire state
- Re-evaluate the current managements plans to allow improved operational flexibility of our water projects
- Reform the Endangered Species Act
- Revise the San Joaquin River Restoration Settlement

Storage must be in the final resolution, **new storage** including the Temperance Flat site; **enhanced storage** including raising dams and expanding reservoirs where possible; and also **building new conveyance and storage infrastructure** statewide to capture rain and snow melts.

In Tulare County, the agriculture industry directly supports 25% or more of the employment of our County's residents, and a large percentage of our disadvantaged and minority residents are directly impacted when agriculture jobs are lost. In-directly the agriculture industry's multiplier effect adds approximately \$3 additional dollars for every \$1 produced by agriculture, and the effect in our communities is immense when drought and water cut backs cripple our farms and ranches.

Farm Bureau supports a bipartisan effort from the House and the Senate to craft this comprehensive solution for immediate relief and long term solutions. Thereby securing a reliable water supply for all of California, and to protect the number one industry in the state, agriculture. We respectfully ask for your collective help and influence to save our state from catastrophic losses.

For years, you have fought to bring water back to the valley; this year is no different. We support your introduction of H.R. 23, the Gaining Responsibility On Water (GROW) Act of 2017. This legislation will ensure reliable water deliveries for our valley, secure private property and senior water rights, and save millions of dollars by ending wasteful protectionist plans.

Now is the time to enact long term, meaningful solutions to California's water supply issues and we are hopeful this legislation is the next step in addressing the challenges we face. We look forward to working with you on advancing H.R. 23, the GROW Act, this Congress.

Thank you,



ROGER EVERETT
President