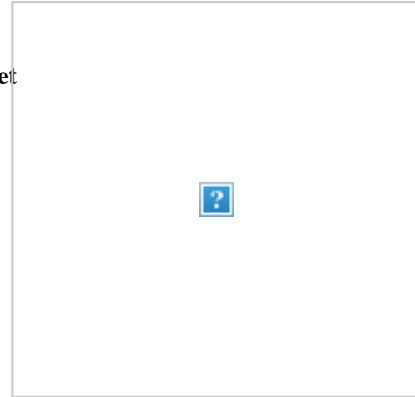


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UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER AND POWER
THE HONORABLE KEN CALVERT, CHAIRMAN

H.R. 2301, AUTHORIZING A NEW BRIDGE AT FOLSOM DAM

TESTIMONY OF THE HONORABLE ROGER NIELLO
SACRAMENTO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

April 10, 2002

MR. CHAIRMAN and distinguished members of the Committee, my name is Roger Niello, and I am a member of the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors. I am here in support of H.R. 2301, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to construct a bridge on Federal land west of, and adjacent to, Folsom Dam in California.

I join my friends and colleagues invited to testify today in thanking you and the members of the Subcommittee on Water and Power for holding this hearing this afternoon. This is truly a critical project, and we cannot do what needs to be done without federal involvement. Sacramento County also recognizes the hard work and dedication exhibited by Congressman John Doolittle on this issue. We truly appreciate Congressman Doolittle's commitment to securing the new bridge and doing so in a fiscally responsible manner. His legislation recognizes the realities of dam security as well as regional transportation and air quality issues, and we appreciate his leadership in taking on this necessary project.

We urgently need the bridge authorized by H.R. 2301 to ensure security at Folsom Dam and Folsom Reservoir. This new bridge is essential for the physical safety and economic stability of our region and the State of California. By removing automobile traffic from Folsom Dam, we will prevent the possibility of a catastrophic failure and flood that could be caused by a terrorist act. Mr. Chairman, I strongly support this

legislation and I urge you and your colleagues to act speedily on H.R. 2301 to make certain the bill is passed and signed into law as soon as possible.

I am here to provide a regional perspective on the importance of securing Folsom Dam from a terrorist attack. As a local businessman, I know quite a bit about the power of our regional economy. As a public official I have learned the importance to our public safety and economy of a viable water supply, a reliable energy grid, and a functioning transportation system. I also serve on the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency, so I am painfully familiar with our vulnerability to flooding and the devastating impact a major flood would have on Sacramento and on California. I do not believe it is hyperbole to suggest that a major flood in Sacramento coupled with the immediate loss of a major water and power supply, would have a damaging impact on our national economy. Simply put, the impact of a catastrophic failure of Folsom Dam would be beyond devastation.

As members of this subcommittee are aware, flood control is a contentious issue in our region. Nonetheless, we all agree about the risks of a major flood. For perspective, Folsom Reservoir holds 976,955 acre feet of water. According to the Bureau of Reclamation – the owner / operator of the dam –this is enough to cover the state of Rhode Island to a depth of one-and-one-half feet. According to the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency, the failure of the Folsom Dam would put at risk approximately 300,000 residents, 5,000 businesses and \$25 billion in property, including major highways, schools, our State Capitol and a multitude of other public institutions. I know our region has rebounded from flooding before, and I know we are capable of overcoming significant obstacles of many types. But I wonder whether we could ever fully recover from such an event.

In addition to flood control, Folsom Reservoir provides drinking water to the City of Folsom, portions of Sacramento County, the City of Roseville, and other local and regional water authorities. Folsom Dam and Reservoir are key components of the Central Valley Project and help ensure water supplies are available to agriculture and municipalities throughout the state. I need not remind this subcommittee of the paramount importance of ensuring a reliable supply of clean water in our state. Our water supply and delivery system would be severely rocked by the sudden loss of Folsom Dam and Reservoir.

With the core of a major metropolitan area submerged under several feet of water and its primary water supply reservoir empty, the added impact of a loss of a critical electricity source would seem unimaginable. It would, in this case, be all too real. The three generators at Folsom Dam's power plant produce up to 210 megawatts of electrical power and provide power for nearly 70,000 homes each day. As you all know, our state's energy challenges are all too serious as it is. Given the magnitude of these challenges, the citizens of our state and our region have demonstrated an admirable capacity to conserve our recently much more precious supply of electricity. We are left, however, with virtually no margin for error. A loss of the power supplied by Folsom Dam would eliminate that empty margin and surely could result in the dreaded black-outs that we have so far largely avoided.

We all understand that H.R. 2301 will provide benefits to our citizens beyond the security needs I previously outlined. We have major traffic congestion and air pollution problems locally and regionally that are caused or aggravated by the existing, obsolete crossing at Folsom Dam. The bridge and linkages provided by H.R. 2301 will provide significant congestion relief upon completion and also anticipate and address future growth in our region. The new bridge authorized by H.R. 2301 will provide great benefits beyond security.

In spite of the significant security risk, I agree with my colleagues Mayor Starsky and Councilmember

Miklos that we cannot afford for Folsom Dam Road to be summarily closed. It is a national priority to remove traffic from Folsom Dam Road as speedily as possible. However, we also have a keen interest and responsibility to help ensure the vitality of our local and regional economy by providing a workable transportation system. To that end, we must keep Folsom Dam Road open – with adequate security measures in place – until the new bridge is operational.

We must recognize that closing Folsom Dam Road without a replacement would be devastating to the local and regional economy. H.R. 2301 is the necessary step in removing traffic from the dam, but we must also recognize the economic, traffic circulation, and air quality needs and realities in our region. My colleagues on this panel and I share grave concerns regarding allowing traffic atop the dam until the new bridge is in place. It is a difficult balance to strike and one that carries risks, but we must recognize that our economic security and our national security are absolutely intertwined.

I also agree with my colleagues on the panel that government efficiency requires the new bridge to be a full-service, four-lane bridge. Congressman Doolittle's legislation properly requires that the bridge be designed and constructed with appropriate sizing and linkages to support present and future traffic flow requirements for the City of Folsom and the adjacent Sacramento County, Placer County and El Dorado County communities.

As I said before, flood control is always controversial in our region. It is important to point out, though, that this legislation has absolutely no prejudicial effect on the flood control debate. The new bridge will secure the facility, will provide additional transportation and air quality benefits, and will do so without biasing the flood control debate or outcome.

H.R. 2301 is the right legislation at the right time. This bill is about ensuring the physical and economic security of our citizenry. It accomplishes the goal by preventing terrorists access to a federal facility identified by the Bureau of Reclamation as one of the top five security risks within its jurisdiction. H.R. 2301 will help ensure reliable water and energy supplies for our region and for the State of California, so critical to our economy and our way of life in California. H.R. 2301 also anticipates other important national and regional priorities, including transportation congestion relief and air quality improvement. In spite of achieving other important local, regional, and national goals, we cannot forget that the *fundamental purpose H.R. 2301 is to ensure the security of the dam.*

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for holding this hearing and giving my colleagues and me, from Northern California, the opportunity to appear before you today. We also again wish to thank Congressman Doolittle for all his work on this legislation and on behalf of our community over the past decade. I urge the Subcommittee on Water and Power to report favorably on H.R. 2301 as soon as possible. This concludes my formal statement, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Again, thank you.