



**Aileen Roder
California Water Project Coordinator
Taxpayers for Common Sense**

**Testimony before the Water and Power Subcommittee,
House of Representatives Resources Committee
on H.R. 2301**

April 10, 2002

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Good afternoon, Chairman Calvert, Congressman Smith, and other distinguished members of the Subcommittee. I am Aileen Roder, the California Water Project Coordinator at Taxpayers for Common Sense (TCS), a national, non-partisan budget watchdog group. I would like to thank you for inviting me to testify at this hearing regarding H.R. 2301 which would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to construct a bridge on federal land west and adjacent to Folsom Dam in California.

Taxpayers for Common Sense strongly opposes H.R. 2301. This bill, introduced in June 2001 by Congressman John Doolittle (R-CA), ignores an existing U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plan to provide much needed flood control to the City of Sacramento and build a temporary bridge southeast of Folsom Dam. This bridge could be turned over to the City of Folsom and would relieve the security concerns arising from the tragic events of September 11th.

In February, the Corps of Engineers released a Final Supplemental Plan Formulation Report/Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (FEIS). This FEIS called for a 7-foot raise of Folsom Dam in order to reduce the City of Sacramento's flood risk to a 1-in-213 chance in any given year. Recognizing the obvious impact of the raise on the dam bridge traffic, the Corps proposed a temporary bridge southeast of the Folsom dam. The bridge would be similarly sized to the existing dam bridge and aligned to ensure that no conflicts occur with existing Folsom Dam operations during the raise. After completion of the dam, the Corps envisions routing traffic back over the dam and removing the bridge. However, the Corps stated that the bridge could be left in place if a local sponsor is identified to assume the operation and maintenance responsibilities. This project is poised for authorization in the regular process later this year. I have

attached the applicable portions of the Corps FEIS to my testimony.

H.R. 2301 ignores all of this work by the Corps, and is a blatant attempt to take advantage of legitimate security concerns and end run the normal process and federal-local cost sharing for building road improvements. Instead of involving the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), local entities such as the City of Folsom, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), or the Army Corps of Engineers, which has already contemplated building a bridge in the area, H.R. 2301 brings in a completely unrelated agency into the process, the Bureau of Reclamation.

Simply put, the Bureau of Reclamation is not in the business of building bridges. The stated mission of the Bureau of Reclamation is to “manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public.” The Bureau is in the water supply business not the bridge-building business. Foisting responsibilities upon the Bureau that are outside of its core mission sets a terrible precedent and reduces the agency’s effectiveness in the increasingly critical work of managing the West’s water supply. This bridge work will compete with and potentially crowd out legitimate Bureau of Reclamation funding in the Energy and Water Appropriations bill.

TCS recognizes that building a new bridge may be justified to reduce security concerns raised by having a bridge on the dam. We also recognize that a wider bridge may be needed, but the process established in this bill bypasses the very mechanisms that are in place to evaluate that need and address those concerns.

Members of the Committee should know that H.R. 2301 clearly envisions more than replacing the bridge that currently traverses Folsom Dam. This bill would likely upgrade the bridge from two lanes to four lanes. USDOT has a process and formula to identify situations where the upgrade of a two-lane road to a four-lane road is justified. We believe that if local interests want more lanes or a substantially improved bridge, then the City of Folsom and the State of California in concert with the Highway Trust Fund are the proper sources for bridge enhancement design and funding. Funding should certainly not come from the General Treasury or Energy and Water Appropriations.

Unfortunately, this bill completely avoids a discussion of non-federal cost sharing or an analysis of traffic needs and instead foists the entire bill on the federal taxpayer. While security concerns may be a legitimate reason for federal funding, the bridge upgrade costs should be borne in the normal fashion by the local beneficiaries of bridge expansion.

According to Congressman Doolittle’s June 26, 2001 press release on H.R. 2301, “The region’s heavy reliance on the Folsom Dam Road means that even temporary closures can snarl traffic through Folsom, inconveniencing drivers and harming the local retail-based economy.” Representative Doolittle added, “It is clear that a permanent, full-service bridge is needed to ensure greater transportation efficiency and commuter convenience.”

Building a bridge to replace the one traversing Folsom Dam may potentially be tied to security concerns, but building an enhanced, four-lane bridge has never been attributed to security or safety. Instead, this upgrade from a two to four-lane bridge is tied to local economics and the convenience of the City of Folsom’s citizens. The federal taxpayer should not be picking up the whole \$85 million tab for “commuter convenience”.

We cannot fathom the reasoning behind building an enhanced bridge entirely on the federal taxpayers' dime and then turning over ownership of the bridge to the City of Folsom. The City of Folsom and Caltrans must shoulder their portion of responsibility in this process. Instead, H.R. 2301 demands that the federal taxpayer shell out \$85 million and then forces the government to turn the bridge over to a non-contributing, non-federal entity.

In closing, the Bureau of Reclamation should not be forced to deviate from its core mission by becoming a highway construction agency. Any bill authorizing construction of an improved Folsom bridge should strictly define federal and non-federal cost sharing. Such a bill should go through the normal highway authorization process, taking into account that the Army Corps of Engineers is already contemplating construction of a two-lane bridge. The replacement bridge planned by the Army Corps is estimated to cost \$20 to \$30 million compared to the \$85 million price tag of H.R. 2301. The replacement bridge will alleviate the security concerns of having a bridge on Folsom Dam. Congress should not raid the coffers of agencies dependent on the energy and water appropriations to pay for the traffic convenience of a few local beneficiaries.

Thank you again for opportunity to testify today and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Supplemental Information Sheet

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