

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 22, 2015

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
United States Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Feinstein and Boxer:

We are writing to express our concerns with H.R. 2898, Western Water and American Food Security Act of 2015, which passed the House last week. This bill does nothing to solve California's water crisis or address the drought impacting Oregon and states throughout the West. Instead, H.R. 2898 preempts state laws, reduces management flexibility, eliminates protections for salmon and other endangered species, and rolls back our nation's fundamental environmental laws.

The State of California opposes federal legislation that would "weaken state and federal environmental protections, pre-empt state law and favor one region or economic sector of the state over another," which is exactly what this bill does. Moreover, this proposal would not support the State's groundbreaking work to address the drought through water conservation programs, infrastructure improvements, and innovative water recycling initiatives.

We are pleased that state and federal agencies have been making great progress by working proactively and collaboratively. These agencies should retain the statutory flexibility to best manage our water supply rather than the prescriptive language proposed in H.R. 2898. In fact, the Department of Interior agrees that this bill is the wrong course of action because it would, "impede an effective and timely response to the continuing drought while providing no additional water to hard hit communities."

Further, the bill preempts state law, including California's long-standing system of water rights, overriding the regulations that Californians themselves have devised to administer the state's complex water supply system. An expansion of federal management over the world's most complicated water structure sets a bad precedent for states across the country.

H.R. 2898 also reaches into other Western states, including Oregon. By weakening protections for fish in California's Bay-Delta, this bill has potential far-reaching and damaging impacts on Oregon's fishing industry, wildlife, and related economy. On multiple occasions, Senators and House Members of the Oregon delegation have written to you expressing parallel concerns with similar short-sighted legislation, H.R. 5781, that passed the House in the 113th Congress.

We also note that opposition to this legislation include other key stakeholders such as commercial and sport fishermen, Native American tribes, environmental groups, and recreational employers. The Obama Administration also issued a veto threat against this bill because of its potential to undermine environmental laws.

Responsible solutions to the West's short and long-term water shortages require input from all stakeholders without prioritizing sectors of the economy or geographic region at the expense of others. This historic drought demands serious compromise involving all affected parties and we appreciate the leadership you have shown for this crisis thus far. We remain committed to working with you on federal drought legislation that does not negatively impact the economies, farmers, communities, and environments of California, Oregon, and other Western states.

Sincerely,



JERRY MCNERNEY
Member of Congress



JARED HUFFMAN
Member of Congress



PETER DEFAZIO
Member of Congress



MARK DESAULNIER
Member of Congress



SUSAN DAVIS
Member of Congress



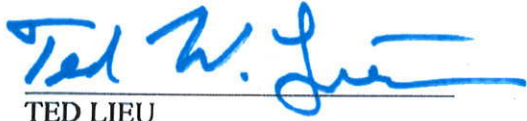
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