



July 21, 2020

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

Re: Support for S. 3811, the *Restoration of Essential Conveyance Act*

Dear Senator Feinstein,

Western Growers is pleased to support S.3811, the *Restoration of Essential Conveyance Act*, and we thank you for your leadership on this issue. Western Growers Association is an agricultural trade association headquartered in Irvine, California that represents fresh fruit, vegetable, and tree nut producers in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado. Our association's members grow approximately 50 percent of the total fresh produce production in the United States, including 50 percent of the total organic produce production.

You have long focused on ensuring that all Californians, including our world-class farmers, have reliable water supplies. The Delta-Mendota Canal, Friant-Kern Canal, San Luis Canal and California Aqueduct are critical water infrastructure facilities that convey water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to California water users. Each of these conveyance facilities has suffered critical damage that has significantly reduced their capacity largely as a result of land subsidence. Without significant repairs, these facilities' conveyance capacity will further decline, choking off water supplies for farmers and also undermining the Newsom Administration's desired resiliency in adapting to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). As you know, adaptation to SGMA's mandates will result in good farmland being taken out of production. The question to be answered by policy decisions is how much farmland will be permanently lost. Only a fully capable conveyance system capable of moving excess precipitation runoff to groundwater storage facilities and recharge-capable farmland can provide the resiliency needed to avert an economic and social disaster under SGMA.

Obviously these variable outcomes are enormously consequential to thousands of farms in California and millions of our fellow Californians connected to the agricultural economy. These canals must be repaired and water reliability must be ensured.

S. 3811, the *Restoration of Essential Conveyance Act*, authorizes \$600 million in federal funding for three major projects to repair California's water delivery systems which have experienced reduced conveyance capacity as a result of subsidence along the canals. The bill provides \$200 million for the

Friant-Kern Canal, \$200 million for the Delta-Mendota Canal, \$100 million for the San Luis Canal, and \$100 million for the California Aqueduct. Groundwater overdraft (exacerbated by state and federal regulatory policies that have since 1992 increasingly reduced surface water deliveries to the San Joaquin Valley and Southern California) and persistent and worsening drought conditions have contributed to subsidence in these areas. Without federal support it is unlikely the capacity of California's water delivery systems will be protected and restored. Additionally, the bill provides \$200 million in funding for restoration of the San Joaquin River, including environmentally protective infrastructure such as fish screens, fish bypass projects, and control structures necessary to successfully implement the San Joaquin River Restoration Settlement.

California, indeed, much of the western United States, is on the brink of a water crisis given the state of aging, impacted, or inadequate infrastructure, particularly in light of the hydrologic impacts of a changing climate. *The Restoration of Essential Conveyance Act* is a welcome step towards restoring critically-important water supplies to 27 million Californians, particularly to those communities most in need, three million acres of the nation's most productive farmland, and hundreds of thousands of acres of wildlife habitat. We write to express the need for this legislation and support its passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Puglia'.

Dave Puglia
President and CEO
Western Growers

dpuglia@wga.com

949.885.2252