

**Statement of Congressman David G. Valadao
Before the House Committee on Natural Resources regarding
H.R. 737, the Responsible, No-Cost Extension of Western Water Infrastructure
Improvements Act (RENEW WIIN) Act**

May 6, 2021

Good morning Chair Grijalva, Ranking Member Westerman, and members of the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to highlight the importance of my legislation, H.R. 737, the Responsible, No-Cost Extension of Western Water Infrastructure Improvements Act, otherwise known as the RENEW WIIN Act. The RENEW WIIN Act would extend the general and operations provisions of Subtitle J of the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act, or WIIN Act, and extend the provision requiring consultation on coordinated operations of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project. The legislation would also extend the authorization of appropriations for water storage projects that the Secretary of the Interior finds feasible.

Passage of this legislation is especially urgent given the worsening drought conditions in California. This drought is already so severe that in February of this year, the Bureau of Reclamation announced a mere five percent water supply allocation for South-of-Delta agriculture repayment and water service contractors. That five percent allocation immediately worried our farmers in the Central Valley, unsure how they would be able to continue to put food on the tables of Americans with so little water. Only one month later, the Bureau of Reclamation amended that allocation decision and now it is on hold until further notice. We are faced with a grim, dry forecast that does not look to improve anytime soon so the hold might as well be an allocation of zero percent.

Water conservation and scarcity is already a daily reality for my constituents. We all know we cannot make it rain and we cannot produce water out of thin air. We have to work with the water we already have and apply commonsense solutions to make this water available to the communities that need it by doing everything possible to survive yet another drought. But it is not possible for my constituent's farms and livelihoods to survive on nothing.

Communities in my district are suffering because of lack of action in Congress. Unfortunately, this is not an issue exclusive to my district or even exclusive to California. The Central Valley has the most agriculturally productive land in America. Our farmers feed not only our communities across the United States, but also across the world. Californian farmers and producers grow more than one-third of the vegetables and two-thirds of the fruit and nuts produced in the United States. Depriving our farmers of the water they need to grow our nation's food ultimately increases the cost of food for every person in the United States.

For these reasons, I am astonished that the Majority on the Natural Resources Committee has yet to take action to address the drought in California or consider legislation like RENEW WIIN that will bring clean, reliable water to suffering families and to the farms our entire nation relies on for food.

The RENEW WIIN Act is a no-cost, commonsense piece of legislation that simply extends authorizations for operations and storage and provides us with more time to potentially consider additional meaningful legislation related to water storage and delivery.

I understand that, as Members of Congress, we are tasked with reviewing a countless number of important issues. Every issue each of our constituents cares about is important. We are also tasked with prioritizing these issues, and it is irresponsible of the Committee to fail to prioritize finding solutions to the real suffering of hardworking Americans, particularly during this severe drought that is taking place in real time and will have lasting, damaging consequences. Refusing to conduct hearings concerning the drought, or at the very least include the topic of California's drought in hearings, is insulting. At the same time, keeping critical legislation, including my bill, the RENEW WIIN Act, off of the agenda directly harms my constituents, and by way of increased food costs, it harms all of your constituents as well.

I cannot express enough the importance of expediting the passage of the RENEW WIIN Act and having honest, transparent conversations regarding the California drought crisis. We cannot wait. California families cannot wait. Our farmers cannot wait. I implore you to prioritize the needs of people, prioritize the families that are being devastated by the drought, and prioritize commonsense solutions to deliver water to the disadvantaged, struggling communities in the Central Valley. Not only my constituents, but all of our constituents, need your immediate efforts on the matter.

Thank you again for giving me the opportunity today to highlight the importance of my legislation. I hope you will consider holding a legislative hearing on the RENEW WIIN Act in the near future.