

Harder Statement: SAVE Water Resources Act

June 13, 2019

Statement: Thank you, Chairman Huffman and Ranking Member McClintock. I appreciate the opportunity to join you here today and I want to thank you for including the SAVE Water Resources Act in this hearing. And I want to thank my friend Anthea Hansen from the Del Puerto Water District for making the trip out here to testify.

Water may not be top of mind for a lot of folks here in Washington, but in my home in California's Central Valley, we think about it every day. We have the most variable rainfall in the country. And as many of you know, we just came out of the longest and most severe drought in the state's history.

Because of variable rainfall, we're locked into boom and bust cycles. And federal water policy hasn't been designed to manage the extremes of a state like California where we have the largest population and produce the most food. Sustaining our population and our vibrant ag industry requires reliable, consistent innovation and investment in our water infrastructure.

But for too long our water policies have been stuck in a 20th century paradigm. Too often, our water debates are viewed as being zero-sum. Water users duke it out in court. California and the Trump administration go back and forth, and all the while we miss valuable opportunities to grow the water supply, capture more water and prepare for the next drought, which experts say is just around the corner!

That's why I worked alongside stakeholders of all stripes – even traditional adversaries – to develop this bill and I was able to announce it standing side by side with organizations ranging from

the Farm Bureau to conservation organizations like our local Sierra chapter. I have the support of local Republicans and Democrats alike. And I've tried to craft a bipartisan solution that avoids the old water fights that have raged in our state for decades.

My bill will allow us to capture more water supplies during water booms – like the one we're experiencing this year – and preserve it to prepare for the next bust.

It would achieve do so by making long-overdue investments in water storage capacity – both for surface and groundwater storage. Obviously, if you've got variable rainfall you need to capitalize during the wet years.

But storage won't be enough. We need to increase efficiency and get into some of our untapped sources of water. We've not invested enough in making desalination more efficient and accessible. That's why my bill would create the X-Prize, which would unleash the power of the private sector to create innovation in these areas and other emerging technologies.

The bill would also create a much-needed water infrastructure fund to support infrastructure investments that we should have made decades ago. It also increases funding for existing programs like WATERSmart and creates new programs like RIFIA to leverage non-federal investment in our water infrastructure.

And as many of my California colleagues on this committee know – unsafe drinking water is a big problem in the Central Valley. That's why my bill reauthorizes the Bureau of Reclamation's Rural Water Supply program – we need to make sure we provide rural communities with the tools they need to have access to safe drinking water.

This is just a partial summary of my bill, but I will say that in crafting my bill, I've tried to break free from the same old water fights and think differently about water. We can't afford partisanship or ideological warfare in these discussions. We're talking about the water we drink and the food we eat.

Again, thank you Mister Chairman Huffman and Ranking Member McClintock for holding this hearing. And I yield back.