



## WESTERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

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March 17, 2010

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye  
Chairman of the Senate  
Committee on Appropriations  
722 Hart Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510-1102

The Honorable Dave Obey  
Chairman of the House  
Committee on Appropriations  
2314 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515-4907

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Ranking Member of the Senate  
Committee on Appropriations  
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510-2402

The Honorable Jerry Lewis  
Ranking Member of the House  
Committee on Appropriations  
2112 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senators Inouye and Cochran and Representatives Obey and Lewis:

On behalf of the Western Governors' Association, we are writing to express our support for the appropriation of significant funds for water supply projects benefiting Native Americans, as authorized by the United States Global Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Reauthorization Act of 2008 (P.L. 100-293). Title VI authorizes the Emergency Fund for Indian Safety and Health (EFISH), which provides for domestic Native American water supply needs, as well as water right settlement funding.

A crucial element of effective water supply planning and management in the West is the resolution of the considerable water right claims of Native Americans. Western Governors and our water policy advisory body, the Western States Water Council, have long supported negotiated settlements of such claims rather than protracted, expensive and uncertain litigation. To this end, Western Governors and the Council have worked with the Native American Rights Fund, the Department of the Interior and others to promote negotiated settlements, and some 23 settlements have been authorized by Congress.

Our report, *Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future: Next Steps*, calls for action to "ensure that any land or water settlement, once authorized by the Congress and approved by the President, will be funded and implemented in a timely manner without a corresponding offset to some other tribe or essential Interior Department program." In addition WGA Policy Resolution 07-3 states: "The Western Governors believe that the funding of land and water rights settlements is an important obligation of the United States government [that] is analogous

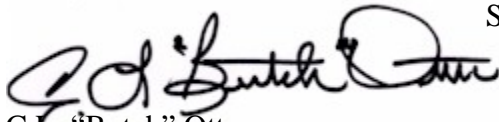
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to, and no less serious than, the obligation of the United States to pay judgments which are rendered against it.”

The funding authorized by Title VI of the Act would provide essential federal support for settlement of Native American water right claims throughout the West and would help fulfill the federal government’s trust obligations to Native Americans. Twenty United States Senators, many from Western states, have written the Administration urging it to include a total of \$667,000,000 in the Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Request for the purposes authorized by Title VI of the Act (including not only water supply projects, but also law enforcement activities and health programs in Indian Country). Importantly, this request should be over and above any amounts already included in the baseline budgets for the Department of Interior and its respective water-related programs, and for Native American and Alaska Native law enforcement, health programs and water right settlement-related projects. Western Governors fully support this request and urge Congress to appropriate the requested EFISH funds.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

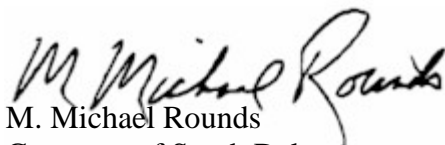
Sincerely,



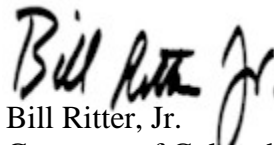
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WGA Vice Chairman and Lead Governor for Water



Bill Richardson  
Governor of New Mexico  
WGA Lead Governor for Water



M. Michael Rounds  
Governor of South Dakota  
WGA Lead Governor for Water



Bill Ritter, Jr.  
Governor of Colorado  
WGA Lead Governor for Water