



## WESTERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

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October 25, 2012

The Honorable Ralph Hall  
Chairman  
House Science Committee  
2321 Rayburn  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Ranking Member  
House Science Committee  
394 Ford  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jay Rockefeller  
Senate Commerce Committee  
Chairman  
Russell 254  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison  
Senate Commerce Committee  
Ranking Member  
Dirksen 560  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Representatives Hall and Johnson and Senators Rockefeller and Hutchison:

We are writing to express Western Governors' support for S. 3584 and H.R. 6489, bills to reauthorize the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS). As you may know, Western Governors pushed for creation of NIDIS in 2006 and we have since worked with NOAA and other partners to make it work on the ground.

Western Governors have long been acquainted with the significant impacts that drought can have on life in the West. Dry conditions contribute to forest and rangeland fires, shortages of grain and other agricultural products, and threats to municipal water supplies. Currently, more than 75 percent of the contiguous United States is suffering from some degree of abnormally dry to extreme drought conditions, affecting almost all of our states.

NIDIS provides authoritative, objective and timely information on drought that farmers, ranchers, water managers, and policy makers need to prepare for and respond to drought. NIDIS has established a 'drought portal' where information is integrated across agencies, providing a single online source of information for users of drought information. Under NIDIS, NOAA is building an emerging network of early warning systems

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for drought, working with local resource managers to recognize and address unique regional drought information needs.

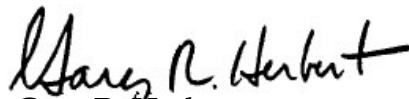
Western Governors value the approach NOAA has taken in building and improving NIDIS. Rather than creating a new NIDIS bureaucracy, NOAA has invested in existing capacity at universities and state agencies and with local stakeholders, as called for in the original legislation. Given our shared fiscal challenges, we see this as a model for federal-state collaboration in shared information services.

For these reasons, Western Governors support the reauthorization of NIDIS. We are particularly pleased to see the bi-partisan sponsorship of both bills. We also support the Committees' inclusion of a new reporting requirement for NIDIS, with a focus on enhancing predictive capabilities on the length, severity, and recession of drought conditions.

Attached for your information is WGA policy resolution 11-7: *Water Resource Management in the West*. Please see section B. 7 for our collective views on drought policy.

We look forward to working with your committees, NOAA and other partners to ensure the continued, long-term success of the National Integrated Drought Information System.

Sincerely,



Gary R. Herbert  
Governor, State of Utah  
Chairman, WGA



John Hickenlooper  
Governor, State of Colorado  
Vice Chairman, WGA

Attachment