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May 9, 2013

Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson, Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
394 Ford
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Representative Johnson:

We are writing to express Western Governors' support for reauthorization of the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS). As you may know, the Western Governors pushed for creation of NIDIS in 2006, and we have since worked with NOAA and other partners to advocate its use on the ground. A Senate version of the legislation (S. 376) has already been introduced by Senators Pryor and Moran.

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.

NIDIS provides authoritative, objective, and timely information about drought that farmers, water managers, decision makers, and local governments need in order to prepare for and respond to drought. NIDIS has established a "drought portal" at drought.gov where information from state, federal, and academic partners is integrated into a single online source for stakeholders. Through NIDIS, NOAA is building an emerging network of early warning systems for drought, working with local resource managers to recognize and address unique regional drought information needs.

Western Governors value the approach NOAA has taken to build and improve 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.

Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson

May 9, 2013

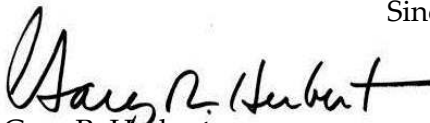
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For these reasons, Western Governors support reauthorization of NIDIS and are pleased to see the Senate's focus on reauthorization. The "*Drought Information Act of 2013* (S. 376) was introduced with bipartisan support. We believe it provides a good basis for House action on this issue, and we encourage the Science, Space, and Technology Committee to introduce and advance a House version of NIDIS reauthorization legislation.

Enclosed for your information is written testimony that the Western Governors' Association submitted to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee for inclusion into the hearing record. The Committee held a hearing on April 25, 2013, to explore the effects of drought on energy and water management decisions, and WGA's testimony speaks to the value of using NIDIS for those decisions.

We look forward to working with you and your colleagues, 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

cc: Members of the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee

Enclosure