



"Serving Western Legislatures"

Council of State Governments-WEST

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August 21, 2003

The Honorable Pete V. Domenici
United States Senate
SH-328 HSOB
Washington, DC 20510-3101

The Honorable Max Baucus
United States Senate
SH-511 HSOB
Washington, DC 20510-2602

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- Kent Briggs**
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The Honorable Alcee L. Hastings
U.S. House of Representatives
2235 RHOB
Washington, DC 20515-0923

The Honorable Dennis Rehberg
U.S. House of Representatives
516 CHOB
Washington, DC 20515-2601

Dear Senators: Domenici
Baucus

Dear Representatives: Hastings
Rehberg

On behalf of The Council of State Governments-WEST, we extend our appreciation to you for introducing the National Drought Preparedness Act of 2003. (S. 1454, H.R. 2871) CSG-WEST is a thirteen state organization of western legislatures working on issues of common concern to our region such as the drought that has fastened on the West over the past several years.

Drought afflicts some part of the United States every year. Although the impacts of drought are not as dramatic as floods or hurricanes, according to the National Drought Mitigation Center, the federal government spends between \$6 to 8 billion dollars a year on drought compared to \$2.5 billion on floods and \$1 to 5 billion on hurricanes. S. 1454 and its companion H.R. 2871 are critical because the nation needs a national drought policy that focuses as much on drought mitigation as drought response. Although there will always be a need for drought response programs, we need to develop and implement a national drought plan in conjunction with state and local governments that ensures long-term water delivery system for both urban and rural uses. Planning, monitoring and forecasting must all be part of an integrated national policy.

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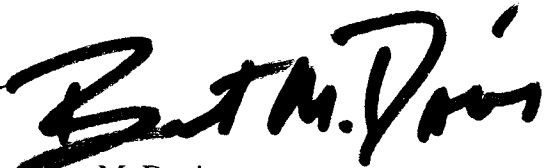
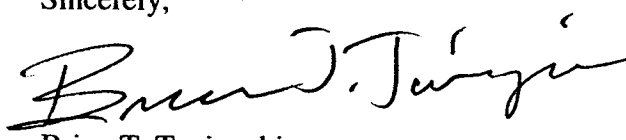
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Carl Bianchi, Director
Legislative Services, Idaho

S. 1454 and H.R. 2871 effectively addresses the following issues that need to be considered: the establishment of a national drought policy by statutorily authorizing the USDA as the lead agency for drought; improved coordination of federal drought assistance programs with state and local governments by designating that role to the National Drought Council; and, improving drought monitoring and forecasting by establishing the National Integrated Drought Information System.

Again, The Council of State Governments-*WEST* commends you for your initiative and pledge our support of your efforts to secure its passage.

Sincerely,



Brian T. Taniguchi
Hawaii State Senate
CSG-*WEST* Chair

Bart M. Davis
Idaho State Senate
CSG-*WEST* Chair-Elect