



John Engler
Governor of Michigan
Chairman

Paul E. Patton
Governor of Kentucky
Vice Chairman

Raymond C. Scheppach
Executive Director

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TO: ALL MEMBERS OF THE U.S. SENATE

On behalf of the National Governors Association, we would like you to join us in supporting the National Drought Preparedness Act of 2002 (S. 2428) recently introduced by Senator Pete V. Domenici and Senator Max Baucus. We applaud their efforts to provide our nation with a much-needed cohesive national drought policy.

According to the National Drought Mitigation Center, nearly one third of the United States is currently in a “moderate” to “extreme” drought. History has proven that the impacts of such droughts can be very costly. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA) reports that 12 different drought events since 1980 have resulted in damages and costs exceeding \$1 billion each as well as thousands of deaths. In 2000, for example, the severe drought in the south-central and southeastern states caused losses to agriculture and related industries of more than \$4 billion — and 140 deaths.

In spite of these repeated droughts destroying crops, local economies, and human lives, our nation still does not have a national policy that coordinates and integrates our preparation and response to drought. The National Drought Preparedness Act addresses this deficiency by:

- **Creating a national drought policy** that would move the country from a costly, ad hoc, response-oriented approach to a pro-active, preparedness-based approach. As the Stafford Act did for natural disasters, this policy would provide the tools and focus for federal, state, tribal, and local governments to address the impacts and costs caused by drought.
- **Enhancing the delivery of federal drought programs** by designating the Federal Emergency Management Agency as the lead federal agency and by creating a coordinating council to bring all federal agencies with drought programs to the table. This council would coordinate and integrate the implementation of federal drought programs and make recommendations to improve them.
- **Establishing new tools for drought preparedness planning** by building on existing policy and planning processes, and by assisting state and local governments in the development and implementation of drought preparedness plans. The bill would not mandate state and local planning but would facilitate plan development and implementation through the establishment of the ‘Drought Assistance Fund.’
- **Facilitating the development of a national forecasting and monitoring network** to improve the reporting of current drought conditions and the forecasting of future droughts and to provide a better basis to “trigger” federal drought assistance.

The National Drought Preparedness Act of 2002 will provide the tools needed to prepare for drought based on a cohesive national drought policy. We ask that you cosponsor S. 2428 and encourage its speedy consideration in the Senate this year.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact Tom Lawler with NGA at (202) 624-7815; or if you wish to become a cosponsor, please contact Shelly Vaughn of Senator Domenici's office at 224-1964 or Karen Bridges in Senator Baucus' office at 224-2651.

Sincerely,

Governor John Hoeven
Chair
Committee on Natural Resources

Governor Ruth Ann Minner
Vice Chair
Committee on Natural Resources