



# SOUTHERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

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June 26, 2002

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
The Capitol  
Room H-232  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

According to the National Drought Mitigation Center, nearly a third of the United States is currently in a "moderate" to "extreme" drought. To provide communities with the tools they need to prepare for drought, Representatives Alcee L. Hastings (D-Fla.) and Dennis Rehberg (R-Mont.) recently introduced the National Drought Preparedness Act of 2002 (H.R. 4754). **We ask that you cosponsor H.R. 4754 and encourage its consideration in the House this year.**

The impacts of drought can be very costly. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA), there have been 12 different drought events since 1980 that 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 over \$4 billion — and 140 deaths.

This year, precipitation in many places along the East Coast is 8-20 inches below normal. Furthermore, parts of the Gulf Coast have received only around half of the normal precipitation since the beginning of the year, bringing the deficit since October 1, 2001, to 12-16 inches or more in some places.

In spite of repeated droughts destroying crops, local economies and human lives, our nation 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 a lead federal agency and 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.

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*Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma,  
Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, U.S. Virgin Islands, Virginia, West Virginia*

- **Establishing new tools for drought preparedness planning.** Building on existing policy and planning processes, the bill would assist 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.

We urge you to cosponsor H.R. 4754 and provide southern communities bracing for a dry summer with the necessary resources to adequately address drought. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Beth Osborne with SGA at (202) 624-5897; or if you wish to become a cosponsor, please contact David Goldenberg in Rep. Hastings' office at 225-1313 or Shelby Neal in Rep. Rehberg's office at 225-3211.

Sincerely,



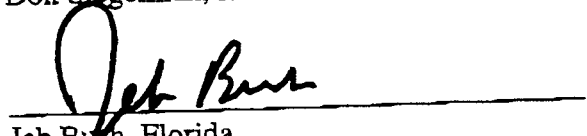
Roy E. Barnes, Georgia



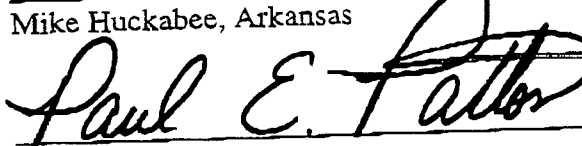
Don Siegelman, Alabama



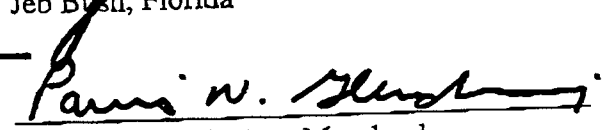
Mike Huckabee, Arkansas



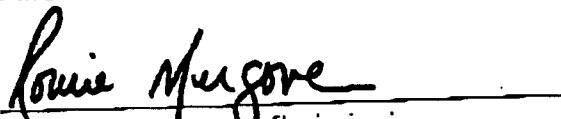
Jeb Bush, Florida



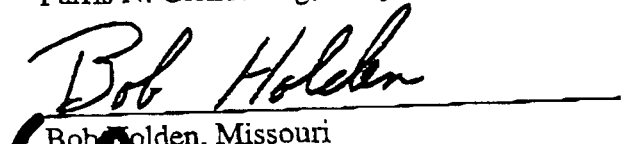
Paul E. Patton, Kentucky



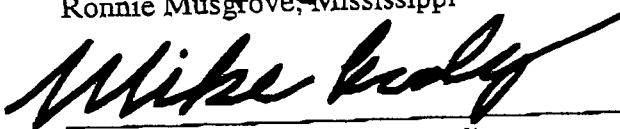
Parris N. Glendening, Maryland



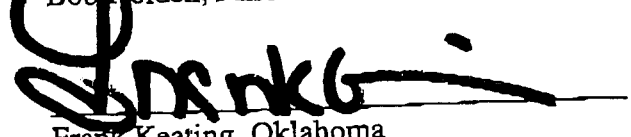
Ronnie Musgrove, Mississippi



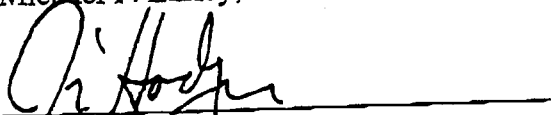
Bob Holden, Missouri



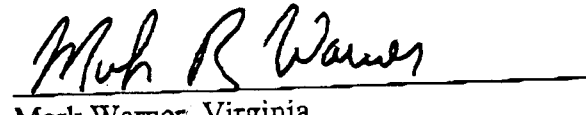
Michael F. Easley, North Carolina



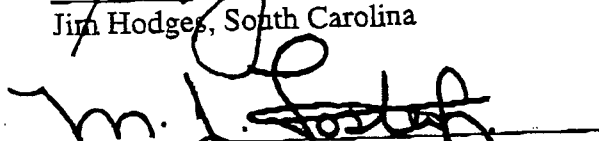
Frank Keating, Oklahoma



Jim Hodges, South Carolina



Mark Warner, Virginia



M. J. "Mike" Foster, Jr., Louisiana