



WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL

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Web Page: www.westgov.org/wswc

June 12, 2002

The Honorable Max Baucus
United States Senate
511 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-2602

Dear Senator Baucus:

Last month, Senator Pete Domenici of New Mexico and Rep. Alcee Hastings of Florida respectively introduced S. 2528 and H.R. 4754, the National Drought Preparedness Act of 2002. The Western States Water Council strongly supports enactment of this important legislation this year and urges all western congressional members to join a growing bipartisan list of cosponsors. With extended drought conditions afflicting many parts of the West, federal legislation is needed to establish a national policy and promote coordination of proactive measures at all levels of government to plan, prepare and mitigate the serious impacts of drought in the United States. Western governors helped draft this legislation and have called on the Congress and the President to support its enactment.

The Western States Water Council is an organization representing eighteen states. Its members are appointed by their respective governors to address a broad range of water policy issues affecting the West. Much of the West is characterized by its aridity. Water is scarce. Its availability continues to circumscribe our economic and environmental well being and quality of life. Drought is a continuous threat. The Council has been actively involved in drought management and policy since 1976, when it served the governors as a regional coordinating body for drought relief efforts and a clearinghouse for information on drought conditions. Western states learned from that experience, and began developing drought response plans for the future. There is no doubt that timely, effective government action at the federal, state, local and tribal levels to prevent or mitigate drought impacts can significantly reduce the effects of drought and the need for relief expenditures. This legislation would help states develop and implement drought preparedness plans.

Governor Gary Johnson of New Mexico and Judy Martz of Montana, co-lead governors for drought issues for the Western Governors' Association have said, "It is high time for our nation to have a comprehensive national policy for drought." We join the western governors in urging the Congress and the Administration to enact this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael J. Brophy".

Michael J. Brophy, Chairman
Western States Water Council