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May 10, 2021

The Honorable Toni G. Atkins  
President Pro-Tem, California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 205  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear President Pro-Tem Atkins:

Once again, California finds itself in a state of drought. Unfortunately, the challenges and adverse impacts of this drought on Californians and businesses are already considerable and will continue to worsen. However, the scenario we find ourselves in today was preventable. The state has a history of missed opportunities to invest in water infrastructure to enhance water supply, protect farmers' and farmworkers livelihoods, and provide safe and affordable drinking water to 40 million residents. While disappointed in the policies and practices that got caused the predicament we find ourselves in today, including the failure to adequately invest in surface storage projects to capture water in wet years, such as Temperance Flat and Sites reservoirs, Senate Republicans are prepared to stand with you on the comprehensive drought package that you have put forward. We believe these actions are appropriate given the state's current drought and relative fiscal health.

Early response by state leaders is critical to minimize the impacts of the drought on households, farms, and ecosystems. In addition, communities across California desperately need emergency assistance. In order to meet the immediate needs and varying demands on our available water supply, we urge you to consider the following comments with regard to your drought relief package and any substantive agreement negotiated with the Governor:

- Funding should be focused on priorities that can help within the next 12-24 months and should be limited to projects that increase water availability or provide water savings, in addition to providing emergency drinking water relief for struggling communities.
- Make direct appropriations rather than competitive grants where possible to expedite projects. As you know, getting this spending out the door immediately will be critical in some cases. Competitive grant programs are generally not compatible with an emergency expenditure to deal with these critical needs.
- The \$5 million cap for projects is inadequate, and we therefore propose that this arbitrary cap be removed so that this financial assistance can produce measurable results.
- Along with the funding package, projects should be provided the necessary regulatory exemptions to streamline their delivery and help keep project costs as low as possible to stretch the dollars as much as possible.

- Instead, the package should contain a much larger investment in cleaning up contaminated wells, or providing replacement domestic wells, which can immediately enhance drinking water supply and reduce reliance on surface water.
- While we should act immediately to get American Recovery Act funds distributed, the distribution of this \$1billion should be done as equitably as possible as water districts throughout the state face substantial debt due to COVID-19 arrearages and the incurred operations and maintenance debt.
- In addition to the expedited bond funding, the package could also include an emergency appropriation of Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Funds for consolidations or extensions of service involving systems that serve disadvantaged communities.

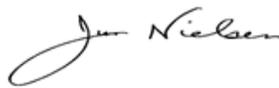
We appreciate the urgency and seriousness which you have brought to this issue in the form of this proposal. Again, we stand ready to assist in this endeavor but want to make sure that the opportunity to help our fellow Californians is not lost to unnecessary bureaucratic delay while ensuring taxpayer dollars are not wasted or used unwisely on projects that won't provide immediate assistance.

Finally, we look forward to working with you in the future to make drought-proofing our state a priority. With climate change upon us and the growth in the state we have seen the last 50 years, the state has to face up to the reality that we are inadequately prepared to endure year after year of drought. In fact, without substantial new investments in infrastructure to provide additional water supply and move water to where it is needed, California will be in a state of perpetual drought. Should you or your staff have any questions, you can reach me directly on my cell, or call my office at (916)651-4021.

Sincerely,



Scott Wilk  
21<sup>st</sup> Senate District



Jim Nielsen  
4<sup>th</sup> Senate District



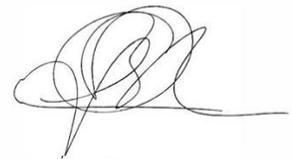
Brian Dahle  
1<sup>st</sup> Senate District



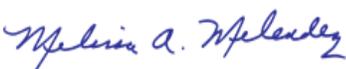
Andreas Borgeas  
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Shannon Grove  
16<sup>th</sup> Senate District



Rosilicie Ochoa Bogh  
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Melissa Melendez  
28<sup>th</sup> Senate District



Patricia Bates  
36<sup>th</sup> Senate District



Brian Jones  
38<sup>th</sup> Senate District

