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1660 L Street, NW • Suite 501 • Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 659-2229 • Fax (202) 659-5234 • email: len.simon@simoncompany.com

MEMORANDUM

TO: Tony Boren
Melissa Garza

FROM: Len Simon
Brandon Key
Jennifer Covino

SUBJECT: Fresno COG 2015 Washington Meetings Summary Overview

DATE: April 21, 2015

Thank you again for the opportunity to work with the 2015 Fresno COG “One Voice” delegation. We were pleased to see such robust engagement between the delegates and the panelists on Capitol Hill and in the federal agency meetings. We believe that the meetings were a highly effective way to communicate the delegates’ priorities with both top-level federal officials and the policy experts working every day to craft relevant legislation and executive action around these priorities.

The COG came at a unique and opportune time to advocate their federal priorities in Washington, as was indicated by the meetings, with the California drought being high on everyone’s list of priorities. The following is a summary of the various meeting, including contact information and follow-up activities.

Monday, April 13th

9:30 a.m. **One Voice Project and Policy Priorities**
Presentations for Congressional Office Staff

Office of Congressman Jim Costa
Scott Petersen, Deputy Chief of Staff
Office of Congressman Devin Nunes
Caitlin Shannon, Deputy Chief of Staff
Office of Congressman David Valadao
Jessica Butler, Legislative Director
Office of Congressman Jeff Denham
Bret Manley, Legislative Director

Meetings Chairman, Mendota Mayor **Robert Silva**, who assumed the gavel in San Joaquin Mayor **Amarpreet Dhaliwal**'s absence due to family matters, opened the meeting stressing the major negative impact that the four-year-long drought was having on all of California, particularly on smaller communities in Fresno County. **Mario Santoyo** then played a six-minute video presentation showing the drought's human and economic impacts on the County. He also suggested that the federal government could consider releasing some water through Shasta Dam, and that the Congress members' support would be helpful to push the process along. Mayor **Victor Lopez** emphasized the damage those two years of a "zero" federal water allocation was having on his agricultural community of Orange Cove. **Paul McLain-Lugowski** talked about the importance of the CDBG and CSBG programs as important economic development tools for communities to use in the face of the drought.

On transportation, **Tony Boren** emphasized the need for Congress to pass a six-year long-term transportation bill. That bill should adopt a "Fix-it-First approach" and maintain formula funding for the STP and SMAQ programs. **Jeff Roberts** asked for federal funding for the Veterans Boulevard Project, noting that Granville Homes is also a transit-oriented developer. Supervisor **Henry Perea** talked about the economic importance of California High-Speed Rail to Fresno County, arguing for Congressional unity on the issue once it is recognized that the project's construction is inevitable. **Lee Ann Eager** noted the project's January 6 groundbreaking in downtown Fresno and said that Fresno County hopes to one day become a "training and education center" for high-speed rail, servicing a new transportation mode that could one day span the entire country.

On agriculture, Supervisor **Perea** requested increased funding under the APHIS program to ensure that there are enough canine detection teams to protect agriculture from invasive pest introduction through parcel facilities. **Lydia Zabrycki** talked about the importance of drip irrigation systems in agriculture, arguing that small and minority farmers are having more difficulty accessing the funding for these systems. **Jessica Butler** said that her boss, Congressman David Valadao, might look into implementing a short-term program related to the drip irrigation issue.

On air quality, Clovis Council Member **Lynne Ashbeck** outlined the air quality issues in the Valley, and urged the Congress members' offices to work toward passage of an Air Quality Empowerment Zone designation. **Scott Petersen** said that Congressman Jim Costa is working with the offices of Congressmen Jerry McNerney and Kevin McCarthy to combine their individual air quality bills.

On economic development, Mendota City Manager **Vince DiMaggio** emphasized the great economic stress that the drought was causing, particularly in Fresno County's smaller communities. He requested changes to EDA programs to make it easier for smaller communities to qualify for economic development funding. Supervisor **Perea** reemphasized the COG's request for at least flat funding for the CDBG program into FY16. Parlier City Manager **Israel Lara** echoed the sentiment that smaller communities do not receive enough federal community or economic development funding to solve the toughest problems.

On workforce development, COG delegates noted that transportation was a major issue in this area. They urged the Congress members to consider directing DOT to increase “targeted hiring” and workforce training.

On public safety, Undersheriff **Steve Wilkins** asked that Congress members continue the SCAAP program into FY16 with increased funding. Though the County has received less money through the program since 2004, as federal funding has continued to decline, it remains an important program for housing the County’s criminal aliens.

On PILT, Supervisor **Perea** urged Congress to at least continue funding the program at current levels, as it remains an important revenue source for the County to use to provide services on federal lands.

The COG delegates then engaged in a productive back-and-forth conversation with the Congressional staff members. **Bret Manley** thanked the delegates for their presentations and thought that visual aids such as the six-minute video could be used to educate non-California members about the drought. He suggested that delegates contact Congressman Rob Bishop’s staff, since he is Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee. **Jessica Butler** said that it is important to educate Senate members on these issues, as well. **Caitlin Shannon** said that Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski is working on a more comprehensive drought/water bill that would include a coalition of western states. **Scott Petersen** said that it would be helpful if Governor Brown and the Obama Administration could at least stay neutral on any drought legislation being drafted in Congress.

Len Simon asked the Congressional staff what the COG delegates should ask for in the later meetings with NOAA and the Bureau of Reclamation. **Scott** said that, at least with NOAA, it would be helpful to get their staff more comfortable with implementing new scientific methods to make their biological opinions more accurate by including additional stressors in their evaluations. **Bret Manley** said that any solution Congress comes up with would include more water storage capacity.

Bret also gave details on what the House was beginning to consider regarding the transportation bill. House leaders are planning to pass a short term extension in May that would last until “September-ish.” With a \$15 billion total Highway Trust Fund shortfall anticipated, the House is considering raising \$8 billion by repatriating some overseas corporate profits, and raising \$7 billion through new oil and gas leasing. The House is not considering raising the federal gas tax, but Congressman Denham is working to increase the allocation set aside for rural bridge maintenance. Congressman Denham does not plan to get involved with the idea of devolving federal transportation responsibilities to the state level. His office is also working to try to combine the CEQA and NEPA processes for environmental review, and that electric car owners should also begin paying in to the Highway Trust Fund in some form. **Bret** said to expect a longer-term transportation bill in September.

Jessica Butler gave a brief appropriations update, saying that the House Appropriations Committee was first set to consider Energy-Water and Military Construction-VA bills. The next bill after that, to be considered in the next few weeks: Agriculture appropriations.

We thanked the Congressional staff for their insights.

Follow-Up Activities

- **Work with House delegation staff as legislation is developed and reviewed;**
- **Contact House Natural Resources Committee staff to provide them with background materials on specific impacts the drought is having on the southern San Joaquin Valley;**
- **Follow up with office of Congressman David Valadao on the idea of creating a short-term program to assist small and minority farmers install drip irrigation systems.**

11:00 a.m. **US Department of Agriculture**
Discussion of Agriculture Priorities

Sarah Scanlon, Deputy Director, Office of External and Intergovernmental Affairs
Mark Rose, Director, Financial Assistance Programs Division (FAPD) at the
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Michael Smith, APHIS Supervisory Veterinary Medical Officer
Katina Hanson, Detailee in the Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs' Main
Office

Sarah Scanlon welcomed the COG delegates and introduced the other Agriculture Department staff members. **Michael Smith** provided a brief overview of APHIS and the USDA Canine Inspection program. **Mark Rose** emphasized the millions of dollars his agency has spent on drought mitigation programs in California, with about \$25 million being spent in FY14. He said that the FY16 round of the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) would be opening up “soon” to help in fighting the drought. The Announcement for Program Funding (APF) should be available shortly, and the local match will remain 50%. **Katina Hanson** talked about the Emergency Conservation Program, which the Fresno County area is eligible for. Her office also handles all the Agriculture “disaster” declarations and implements the Tree Assistance Program. The team noted how USDA is currently the main coordinating federal agency on the drought. USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Ann Mills is leading the Administration’s drought response under the Climate Action Plan.

Mario Santoyo thanked Agriculture Secretary **Tom Vilsack** for participating in a meeting with President Obama in California on the drought, and praised the Secretary as an effective federal communicator on the issue. Mario suggested that Secretary Vilsack should meet personally with Interior Secretary Sally Jewell and EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy on the drought. Mayor **Victor Lopez** invited Secretary Vilsack to visit Fresno County to see the drought’s impact first-hand.

Follow-Up Activities

- **Apply to upcoming rounds of Agriculture Department programs, such as the Regional Conservation Partnership Program;**
- **Formally request that Secretary Tom Vilsack should visit Fresno County to see the drought's impact, preferably with other Administration officials.**

1:00 p.m. **Department of Commerce**
Discussion of Water Policy Priorities

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Office of the Undersecretary
Dr. Christine Blackburn, Senior Advisor
Renee Stone, Chief of Staff

Mario Santoyo explained the drought's negative impact on the agricultural industry in great detail to Dr. **Christine Blackburn**. He thanked NOAA for being proactive in the past on water allocation flexibility and urged all federal agencies to remain as flexible as possible regarding the biological opinions. He noted that farmers in the Delta don't necessarily have screens in place to prevent fish from being sucked into their pumps, a situation that Dr. Blackburn said she was unaware of. Mario argued that more water should also be released from Shasta Lake.

Renee Stone said that an ongoing concern for NOAA, with regards to flexibility on the biological opinions, was getting sued by environmental groups, particularly NRDC. NOAA, the Commerce Department, and the White House are all coordinating to achieve "Maximum Operational Efficiency" for pumping. She noted that in her opinion, in Washington, DC, the drought is still perceived by many as a "California-only" problem.

Follow-Up Activities

- **The COG should initiate a letter to the Department of Commerce reiterating the COG's request for the Department to consider assessing the opportunity to reallocate water from environmental uses to cities and farms, including assessment of the existing Shasta storage for the same purpose;**
- **Communicate with NOAA regarding flexibility in water allocations under the biological opinions.**

2:30 p.m. **Department of Justice**
Discussion of Public Safety Priorities (SCAAP Funding)

Bureau of Justice Assistance
Esmeralda Womack, Division Chief, Southwest Division, Programs Office
Joseph Husted, Program Manager/Policy Analyst

Joseph Husted began with a brief overview of the SCAAP program and how it has affected California. Undersheriff **Steve Wilkins** asked if he thought that Congress would continue to fund the program. Joseph said that he wasn't sure, but Congress has reinstated the program through the appropriations process despite the fact that White House has proposed eliminating it in past years.

Esmeralda Womack provided an overview of the responsibilities of her office at BJA, and said that the next round of the important Byrne-JAG formula program would be open in "early-to-mid May." The Bureau of Justice Statistics is still crunching numbers, to determine the formula allocations.

Follow-Up Activities

- **Continue to monitor BJA programs;**
- **Await grant awards under this solicitation for SCAAP.**

Tuesday, April 14th

9:30 a.m. **US Department of Transportation**
Discussion of Transportation and Infrastructure Priorities

Office of the Deputy Secretary
Deputy Secretary Victor Mendez

Office of Transportation Policy
John Drake, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Governmental Affairs
Kevin Monroe, Director of Government Affairs
Michael Daley, Associate Director of Government Affairs

COG delegates were honored to be joined by the #2 ranking official at the U.S. Department of Transportation, Deputy Secretary **Victor Mendez**, who oversees the day-to-day operations of the agency. In his remarks to the delegates, Mr. Mendez highlighted how California's Central Valley is one of the fastest growing regions in the whole country, and is a top producer of the country's agricultural products. An additional 330 million tons of freight from the Central Valley will need to move through Fresno County in the coming decades. The Administration's newly upgraded GROW AMERICA Act would pursue a more balanced approach to transportation, creating a safer, more reliable freight network. The bill would spend \$18 billion to improve the freight network. It would provide long-term certainty in federal transportation funding and includes dedicated funding for High-Speed Rail. It would increase highway funding by 20 percent and transit funding by 60 percent, with more funding for Bus Rapid Transit.

GROW AMERICA would increase the amount of federal support for the TIGER and TIFIA programs and streamline the environmental permitting process. On safety, Deputy Secretary

Mendez said that DOT is focusing on four things: (1) buckling up; (2) combating distracted driving; (3) making streets safer for pedestrians and cyclists; and (4) encouraging safer driving. He encouraged COG delegates to communicate their transportation challenges by telling the truth about what their communities are experiencing, emphasizing their needs and challenges.

In addition, DOT has decided to extend the comment period for the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on Geographic-Based Hiring Preferences by one month, to **May 6**. This pilot program will explore new ways to make it easier for states and cities to hire local residents for transportation projects through targeted hiring. For more, click on [Geographic-Based Hiring Preferences](#) or [Public Comments Received](#).

Follow-Up Activities

- **Work with Congressional delegation on passage of provisions in the GROW AMERICA Act or a similar long-term transportation reauthorization;**
- **Review and, if needed, comment on DOT’s Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on Geographic-Based Hiring Preferences.**

10:30 a.m. **Valley Leadership 2015** – Congressman Jim Costa

The COG delegation was joined by Congressman **Jim Costa**, Chief of Staff **Juan Lopez**, and Legislative Assistant **Donald Grady**. Congressman Costa gave remarks and provided an overview of his continued efforts to affect water policy at the federal and state level. He believes the situation is worsening from “disastrous” to “catastrophic.” The Congressman had signed onto a “Dear Colleague” letter to the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) along with the rest of the Congressional delegation. That letter was dated Monday, April 13, 2015. He also published an op-ed in the *Fresno Bee*. As of Tuesday, Congressman Costa was still awaiting word from Senator Feinstein’s office regarding her forthcoming legislation. He was hopeful that the Congressional delegation would be able to support her bill. For more, click on [Fresno Bee Op-Ed](#) or [“Dear Colleague” Letter](#).

Congressman Costa supports the COG’s other regional priorities. He continues to advocate for a long-term surface transportation reauthorization bill. He is a co-sponsor of the *Community Economic Opportunity Act of 2015*, which was introduced by a group of 8 bipartisan co-sponsors last month. The bipartisan legislation would reauthorize the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program. He understands that this resource is a critical tool to address poverty in the Central Valley.

Follow-Up Activities

- **Continue to monitor Congressional water legislation;**
- **Work with Congressman Jim Costa to develop legislative solutions.**

1:00 p.m. **Valley Leadership 2015** – Congressman David Valadao

Congressman **David Valadao** opened the meeting by noting that a “Dear Colleague” letter to the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) had been sent the day before and that he would consider sending one to Governor Brown as well. As far as moving a bill through Congress is concerned, the most likely policy resolution will include several western states coming together, in addition to California. He suggested that local elected officials should also send a letter.

He said that a long-term transportation bill would be a “tough lift” but that Congressmen Bill Shuster and Paul Ryan were meeting in the coming weeks to hash out a long-term solution. He said that no funding solution, including the gas tax, had emerged as the best solution, so far. He liked that innovative funding ideas were coming from the likes of Congressman John Delaney and Jim Renacci.

Back on the issue of the drought, Congressman Valadao predicted that, without Congressional action, food prices would increase. Beef and dairy prices already have. Most people spend so little of their discretionary income on food, though, that they might not notice the increases. He noted that in the past few days, 30,000 acre feet of water were sent to the ocean to save six fish. A farming family he knew of with four good-sized operations is planning to move to North Dakota. He told the delegates to thank the Interior Department for their support on opening up discussions with the California SWRCB. He thinks that Secretary Jewell is open-minded to new solutions, but she is hamstrung by the laws as they are currently written. Congressman Valadao acknowledged that the House needs to produce water legislation that can make it through the Senate.

On CSBG, Congressman Valadao said he would have “no problem” signing on to the CSBG Reauthorization, H.R. 1655.

Follow-Up Activities

- **Draft a letter from the COG in support of a western multi-state water solution, when details of the proposal become known;**
- **Work with Congressman David Valadao to develop legislative solutions;**
- **Follow up with staff of Congressman David Valadao on a letter that he intends to write, along with his colleagues, to the California Water Commission and Governor Brown on the importance of building the CALFED storage projects;**
- **Follow up to request the Congressman’s support of H.R. 1655.**

3:00 p.m.

Department of Commerce

Discussion of Community and Economic Development Priorities

Economic Development Administration

Libby Jones, Congressional Affairs Specialist

Congressional Affairs Specialist **Libby Jones** spoke in great detail about the mission of the fifty-year-old Economic Development Administration (EDA) and many ways that the Fresno COG and other local governments can make their applications for EDA funding as competitive as possible. Strong applications have strong public-private partnerships, which the COG is clearly already doing, she said. EDA measures its return-on-investment almost purely through job creation. It gives grants, not loans. The agency has seven grant programs that follow the continuum of needs, running the gamut from public works (road, construction) to technical assistance (economic development, feasibility studies, planning, etc.)

She noted that there is a legal definition for which entities can qualify for EDA funding. One of three things must be true for an applicant: (1) Twenty-four months of unemployment that is 1% or higher than the national average, (2) The area's income 80% or less than the national median income, or (3) "Special Needs." Special Needs come into effect when communities are recovering from a natural disaster, as designated by FEMA. EDA is not a first responder, but will coordinate all the other federal agencies that will help in the long-term recovery to be responsive and meet local needs.

She noted that all EDA grants are awarded competitively. California is serviced by the Seattle regional office, which oversees ten states. The amount of money that Congress appropriates is split six ways. Every application is judged on its own merits. Applicants should consider the following questions: (1) What's going to create or save the greatest number of jobs? (2) What's most competitive? Seattle will take all the applications submitted in that quarter and then they will evaluate and debate the applicants to decide which projects to fund. EDA has two representatives in California. **Malinda Matson** is the Economic Development Representative (EDR) who covers Fresno County. She can be your advocate, so have her come to Fresno County and look at your projects; she can act as a consultant. She can explain which projects would be most competitive for certain EDA programs.

Will Marshall is the EDR for Southern California, mostly focused on the Los Angeles and San Diego regions. **Len Smith** is the Regional Director for the Seattle Office that oversees California.

She noted that State and local governments, nonprofits, and institutions of higher education are all eligible applicants for EDA funding. At the end of the day, EDA is agnostic toward industry as long as you're creating or retaining jobs. EDA relies on EDCs to develop comprehensive economic development strategies. For a specific application, the first question EDA will ask is: Is the project included in the CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy) put together by the Fresno EDC? What is your path forward as a region? It's a legal requirement.

EDA does not want to invest in pet or political projects. The agency invests in long-term goals. On combating the drought, EDA wants to hire economic recovery specialists to help address the immediate challenge. The WET incubator supports emerging technologies in drought resiliency. There's a unique opportunity to collaborate with institutions of higher education, agriculture businesses, et cetera.

She noted that while there are technical requirements for eligibility, where the “rubber meets the road” is the competitiveness threshold. EDA is looking for impact – not just numbers. That's where it comes down to an applicant's individual story. You have to go to your business community and give EDA a number of how many jobs will stay or be lost in relation to the project. A healthy part of the debate is the need. EDA will read your narrative. The agency likes to think of itself as the government's “angel investors.”

EDA has the ability to go to an 80 percent federal share if your budget demonstrates that you can't make the match. Your 20 percent share can be comprised of in-kind contributions. Make the “but for” case.

The EDA request for FY16 is a total of \$250 million with \$80 million reserved for Public Works. It's split six ways.

Follow-Up Activities

- **Request a meeting with EDR Malinda Matson, discuss potential projects, and invite her to tour of sites in Fresno County;**

Malinda Matson, Economic Development Representative (EDR) for Northern and Coastal California
915 Second Avenue
Room 1890
Seattle, WA 98174
P: (916) 235-0088
E: mmatson@eda.gov

- **Review EDA program and match requirements;**
- **Ensure potential projects are included in the CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy) put together by the Fresno EDC.**

4:00 p.m. **Valley Leadership 2015** – Congressman Devin Nunes

On the drought and the prospects for a water bill, Congressman **Devin Nunes** noted that the House passed a bill in December, which was not taken up in the Senate. The House is currently waiting for the Senate to make the next move. Unfortunately, he thought that not enough members understand what's at stake, and the cost of inaction in the Valley. Environmental groups argue that one million acres of cropland need to come out of production.

Congressman Nunes asked the Mayors and Supervisors of the Valley to support the House water legislation. He agreed that CALFED projects are the priority. However, he thought that the state bond measure was written to allow money to be diverted to smaller projects. He urged the COG delegates to emphasize the importance of a water bill to Senator Dianne Feinstein.

Follow-Up Activities

- **Continue to monitor Congressional water legislation;**
- **Work with Congressman Devin Nunes to develop legislative solutions.**

5:00 p.m. **Senator Dianne Feinstein**
SH-331 Hart Senate Office Building
Meeting with Senator and her Staff for presentation of “One Voice” Priorities

Senator’s Office

John Watts, Legislative Director
James Peterson, Natural Resources Director
Felix Yeung, Legislative Assistant
Tristan Colonius, Agriculture/Disaster Legislative Assistant

We met with Senator Feinstein and her key staff – Legislative Director **John Watts**, Natural Resources Director **James Peterson**, Legislative Assistant **Felix Yeung**, and Agriculture/Disaster Legislative Assistant **Tristan Colonius**. The Senator noted the severity of the drought and emphasized she is getting daily reports by her staff on it from all across the state. She said it is too soon to know how the Governor’s order for a 25% reduction in water use will work. **Mario Santoyo** briefed her on the overall impact of the drought on the Fresno County region, including the ongoing depletion of groundwater and discussed both short term and long term solutions. The critical role of the State Water Resources Control Board was discussed.

The Senator offered to write a letter to federal officials indicating that human needs should be taken into consideration in evaluating allocations of water. She stressed how important it was to document human impacts, such as homes without water for basic sanitary needs, emergency room admissions, allergies rates, and other factors where data might be available. She also indicated she would write to the Board asking them for an accounting of their activities to see the extent to which net new water was obtained.

She and staff then discussed the legislation she is working on, for which she will be seeking support from the President, Governor Brown, and Republicans inside and outside the California delegation. We are supposed to get a one-page summary of the bill from staff shortly, which we will forward to COG staff. Among other provisions, for the duration of the drought the bill would give the federal government emergency powers to go above current limits to increase water supply without being sued. She hopes to be able to unveil a consensus legislative approach within a month. Staff indicated they hope to pass their bill before the next rainy season.

Discussion then turned to the Stafford Act, which governs federal disaster assistance, and why it is so difficult for it to be applied to drought situations (\$55 million in public infrastructure damage other abnormal costs must be accrued). Senator Feinstein's staff will continue to explore this possibility. The Senator will also engage with Governor Brown to see if environmental water can be used.

Follow-Up Activities

- **Obtain one-page summary of draft Senate water bill;**
- **Work with Senator's staff as legislation is developed and reviewed;**
- **Work with Senator's staff on issues of disaster declaration;**
- **Work with Senator's staff on letter to Governor Brown on environmental water;**
- **Work with Senator's staff on letter to federal officials on human needs;**
- **Work with Senator's staff on a letter regarding the importance of the CALFED storage projects to the California Water Commission and Governor Brown;**
- **Send the information to the Senator's staff regarding the scheduled Water Commission and Stakeholder Advisory Committee meetings for her staff to consider attending;**
- **Work with Senator's staff to review the phases of evaluating the potential opportunity to reallocate environmental water to cities and farms. The COG and the Senator's staff should discuss the possibility of a letter from Senator Feinstein to the Department of the Interior and Commerce, with a copy sent to Governor Brown and the State Water Resources Control Board;**
- **The COG should coordinate with the Senator's staff regarding Central Valley assistance in gaining support for her proposed Drought Relief Legislation.**

Wednesday, April 15th

11:00 a.m. **House Natural Resources Committee**
Discussion of Water Policy Priorities

Water, Power, and Oceans Subcommittee
Kiel Weaver, Subcommittee Staff Director
Bryson Wong, Research Assistant

We met with Republican Staff Director **Kiel Weaver**, one of the key staff negotiators on the water legislation being debated in Congress, behind the scenes. We were also joined by Research

Assistant **Bryson Wong**, who is originally from Tulare and used to work for Congressman Devin Nunes.

Kiel said that he couldn't speak highly enough about Senator Dianne Feinstein's staff. He talked about how he worked with Senator Feinstein's Legislative Director, John Watts, for six months to reach a House/Senate compromise on a water bill. However, "some people" said no, and the bill was not considered by the Senate. He also noted how helpful Congressman Jim Costa has been on the water issues.

He said that seven staff-level Republicans were meeting, that day, to discuss developing a new water bill with Senator Feinstein. He said that any strategy may be framed as a "western states" water bill, with the emphasis being taken squarely off of California. Right now, members are more focused on a short-term deal than a long-term deal.

Mario Santoyo said that the time it takes for Congress to even develop a "short-term" deal might be longer than the emergency the Valley is facing now. He asked Kiel to take a look at the water stored behind Shasta Dam and have some of that water freed up for the Valley immediately. Mayor **Victor Lopez** highlighted the dire situation being faced by the residents of Orange Cove. Supervisor **Henry Perea** said that he is trying to get the Fresno County Board of Supervisors engaged with Governor Jerry Brown.

Jeff Roberts noted that in Tuesday's meeting with Senator Feinstein, the COG delegates were told that her bill might be introduced in about a month. **Kiel** said that he is waiting for the seven Republicans to determine how to proceed and that, hopefully, there will be a package released this month.

Follow-Up Activities

- **Continue to monitor Congressional water legislation.**

12:00 p.m.

Senator Barbara Boxer

SH-112 Hart Senate Office Building

Meeting with Senator and her Staff for presentation of "One Voice" Priorities

Senate Office

Joaquin Esquivel, Legislative Assistant/Director of Information & Technology

Senate EPW Committee

David Napoliello, Director of Infrastructure

Joseph Mendelson, Chief Climate Counsel

We met with Senator **Barbara Boxer** and her staff in the elegant President's Room just off of the Senate Floor. The Senator briefed us on the transportation legislation she was about to introduce with Senator Rand Paul, the *Invest in Transportation Act of 2015*, which would boost funding for the Highway Trust Fund through "repatriation" of overseas corporate profits. As the

Ranking Minority member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, she will play a key role in the development of a surface transportation bill.

She also talked about her “W21” water legislation, which she introduced with Senator Feinstein in July 2014. She said that she is focused providing additional water new supplies. She said that she is not directly involved in any current water negotiation efforts with Senator Feinstein, but she wants to be supportive of developing new solutions, working with Governor Brown, the White House, and other groups.

Follow-Up Activities

- **Work with the Senator’s staff on the development of water legislation;**
- **Follow up with the Senator’s staff on a letter she intends to co-sign, with Senator Feinstein, to the California Water Commission and Governor Brown on the importance of building the CALFED storage projects;**
- **Work with the Senator’s staff on the development of surface transportation legislation.**

12:00 p.m. **Congressman Jim Costa’s Speech on the House Floor**
 Kristina Solberg, Press Assistant & Legislative Correspondent

A little after noon, a number of COG delegates were honored to sit in the House Gallery and watch Congressman **Jim Costa** deliver a speech on the floor of the House of Representatives, calling attention to the impact of the drought on the San Joaquin Valley. The Congressman met us in the Gallery and proceeded to give us a tour of the hallways and corridors in the Capitol, near the House. We were accompanied by his Press Assistant **Kristina Solberg**.

We thanked the Congressman for his time and personal attention to the issue.

To see a YouTube video of his speech on the House floor, click on [Rep. Jim Costa calls attention to the devastating drought in California's San Joaquin Valley](#).

Here are his remarks, as inscribed in the Congressional Record:

WATER WEEK -- (House of Representatives - April 15, 2015)

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(Mr. COSTA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about our most precious natural resource: water.

It is Water Week here in D.C.; but in the San Joaquin Valley, in California, it is always Water Week.

At first glance at this picture, you might think this was taken in an underdeveloped country thousands of miles away. It is not. These are the squalid living conditions in California's San Joaquin Valley. They are a direct result of the extreme lack of water in California.

While, in part, the drought is to blame, our inability to move the limited water is exacerbating the crisis. While conditions like these are unacceptable, I think to all of us in the richest country in the world, we must do something about it.

It takes water to grow food, period. California grows half the Nation's fruits and vegetables and more, but this year, some estimates say that 1 million acres out of 6 million acres usually in production will be fallowed.

In the short term, we need to act on operational flexibility to deal with this crisis. In the long term, it is time that we fix this broken water system not just for California, but for the West and for the entire world to whom we provide a large part of the food supply. This is the challenge of the 21st century.

END

Follow-Up Activities

- **Continue to monitor Congressional water legislation.**

2:30 p.m. **US Department of Interior**
Discussion of "One Voice" Water Policy Priorities

Bureau of Reclamation
Deputy Commissioner Dionne Thompson
Jeffrey Rieker, Mid-Pacific Regional Liaison

We met with the Bureau of Reclamation's Deputy Commissioner **Dionne Thompson** to talk about what the agency could do to address California's drought. **Mario Santoyo** told her that we had already met with NOAA and Senator Dianne Feinstein. The COG understands that Governor Brown, the State Water Resources Control Board, and the Bureau of Reclamation all need to be a part of the solution. Some of the water stored at Shasta Lake could be released. Mario described the situation as "dire" and that the federal government must act.

Dionne encouraged the COG delegates to remain in contact with the Bureau's Mid-Pacific Regional Director **David Murillo** on this issue. The Bureau is trying to make the best of this situation and is monitoring Delta conditions on a daily basis. The Administration has committed to "do our best" to protect the health and safety in our communities, she said.

Mario said that it's hard for many farmers in the valley to understand why they are receiving a 0% water allocation while water allocation for environmental uses remains at 100%. He

encouraged the Bureau of Reclamation to speed up the approval process to increase water storage capacity at Temperance Flat.

Mayor **Victor Lopez** described the drought's devastating impact on the residents of Orange Cove. Parlier Mayor **Alma Beltran** described how, in her community, some people are using bottled water to take "showers" and that basic sanitation is becoming a major health issue. Reverend **Paul McCoy** talked about the challenges being faced by Fresno County's rural residents.

Dionne said that COG delegates should maintain regular contact with their Congressional delegation. She said that the Administration is fully committed mitigating the droughts effects and that the agencies are continuing to search for any regulatory flexibilities. Her office is in close contact with Senator Feinstein's office.

Mayor **Robert Silva** invited Ms. Thompson and any other officials from the Bureau of Reclamation to visit Fresno County to see the drought's impact first-hand.

Follow-Up Activities

- **Continue to update Congressional delegation on the activity or inactivity of the Bureau of Reclamation;**
- **The COG should initiate a letter to the Department of the Interior reiterating the COG's request for the Department's consideration to assess the opportunity to reallocate water from environmental uses to cities and farms, including the assessment of the existing Shasta storage for the same purpose. The letter should reflect the importance of building the Temperance Flat project and the need for the Department to facilitate, in a timely basis, the process that ultimately leads to Congressional authorization for its construction;**
- **Formally invite Bureau of Reclamation officials to visit Fresno County.**

3:30 p.m. **White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs**

Office of Intergovernmental Affairs

Rohan Patel, Deputy Director and Special Assistant to the President

Council on Environmental Quality

Mariel Murray, Esq., Deputy Associate Director for Lands

Rohan Patel welcomed the COG delegates to the White House complex. Mayor **Robert Silva** outlined the negative impacts of the drought on Fresno County. Mayor **Victor Lopez** described its impact on Orange Cove. Mayor **Alma Beltran** said that the lack of water has led to high unemployment in her community. The lack of sanitation is contributing to the spread of Valley Fever spores.

Rohan asked about what Farm Bill-specific programs the White House should consider talking to the Agriculture Department about. **Mario Santoyo** said that he appreciated the President and the Agriculture Secretary's concerns, but the fundamental problem is simply a lack of water. He said it's unfortunate that municipal and agricultural users have to face such tough cutbacks while environmental water uses are not taking any share of the cuts. He noted our meeting with the Bureau of Reclamation, where he asked the agency to move forward on releasing more water from Shasta Lake and speeding up approval of the Temperance Flat dam.

Mariel Murray said that CEQ and the Administration are working to "optimize" and "maximize" the water supply. CEQ is in conversations with Governor Brown's office bi-weekly, and is coordinating an interagency drought strategy within the federal government. **Rohan** said that the Administration is prepared to negotiate with Congress on a water bill, but that the Administration will not accept major provisions of the Endangered Species Act being significantly altered or ignored. He said that Senator Dianne Feinstein's more "nuanced" approach was favored by the Administration.

Supervisor **Henry Perea** thanked the Administration for their support of California's High-Speed Rail project. **Rohan** thanked the Fresno-area leaders for their support, including Mayor **Ashley Swearengin**, who have been instrumental in moving the project forward.

At the end of the meeting, **Rohan** said that White House staff would follow up with us on the issues we had raised. COG delegates should not hesitate to reach out to the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs via phone or email.

Follow-Up Activities

- **Continue to monitor Obama Administration's role in the water legislation negotiations;**
- **The COG should initiate a letter to the White House reiterating the COG's request for the Administration to assess the opportunity to reallocate water from environmental uses to cities and farms, including assessment of the existing Shasta storage for the same purpose. The letter should reflect the importance of building the Temperance Flat project and the need for the Administration to facilitate, in a timely basis, the process that ultimately leads to Congressional authorization for construction. The letter should also acknowledge the potential Drought Relief legislation that Senator Feinstein may be introducing;**
- **Update Administration on construction of High-Speed Rail in Fresno County.**

Conclusion

We hope this summary is helpful – please let us know if you have any questions and thanks again for the opportunity to help "One Voice" in 2015.

Addendum

(1) [Congressman Jim Costa Op-Ed in the Fresno Bee](#)

Jim Costa: Everyone has a role in ending our water crisis

By Jim Costa

April 4, 2015

The water crisis that California faces is a direct result of two factors, the driest four years on record in more than a millennium, coupled with inflexible rules for the operation of our state and federal water projects.

Making the problem worse are decades of policy makers in both Sacramento and Washington, D.C., who have been unwilling to confront the challenges affecting our state and refusing to make the difficult choices in fixing our broken water system.

Thus, we are living off the investments our parents and grandparents made over the last two generations: a system originally designed for 20 million people and the agricultural use that existed in the 1970s. It was a water system that had been the envy of the world, and helped create California's unparalleled prosperity after World War II.

But much has changed in our state over the last 30 years. We now have 38 million people. We are expected to have 50 million people by 2030 — and even more demands on our water supply.

My hope is that Gov. Jerry Brown's Executive Order of a mandatory 25% reduction in water use will make it fully evident that the severity of the current drought is increasing at an alarming rate.

However, for the last decade the people of Southern California and the Bay Area have seen this drought as a San Joaquin Valley problem that farmers, farm communities and farmworkers must solve alone. With the Metropolitan Water District having an 18-month supply of water left and Silicon Valley likely to receive no water from the San Luis Reservoir, it is clear that this water crisis is not a Valley problem, it is a California problem.

Those of us in elected office in Washington and Sacramento have different roles to play.

The governor will be key if California is to succeed. As the leader of our state, he will have to provide clarity, direction and the leadership to fix our broken water system.

We in the legislative bodies must work and support him in a strategy that incorporates milestones and markers of success. Moreover, this strategy will require a broad coalition of support.

The collective efforts of those of us in Sacramento and Washington will determine whether or not California survives this crisis and plans for the future. The alternative is that we crumble under the weight of this drought and future droughts. Doing nothing is not a solution. Our elected

officials cannot continue to simply engage in political posturing, kicking this can down the road and praying for rain.

The governor's historic announcement last week, I hope, will serve as a catalyst to get meaningful legislative efforts, which provide short-term, interim and long-term fixes to our water crisis. In fact, the failure to provide operational flexibility to our water projects and our inability to permanently fix this broken water system over the last three decades have only exacerbated the situation.

We must use all of the tools in our water toolbox to develop a comprehensive solution to this crisis.

In the short term, we must provide operational flexibility to increase water deliveries with enhanced monitoring to protect endangered fish species and expedite water transfers. We must address the Coordinated Operations Agreement (COA) more fairly, provide funding for economically disadvantaged areas with water shortages, and ensure that water is not wasted.

California, as a world innovator, should increase investment dollars for research and new technologies that will advance our water solutions.

Long-term, we should include increased surface and subsurface water storage, and a conveyance solution to enhance reliability of water supplies and minimize effects on the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta ecosystem. Increased use of recycled and reclaimed water and conservation, especially in urban areas, is a must.

We should continue to improve the significant conservation that California agriculture has implemented over the last two decades, which is among the world's most efficient.

How else would we have survived the past two years with a zero water allocation under the Central Valley Water Project? Water is extremely costly and farmers do not want to put more water on a crop than is necessary. Additionally, the recently suggested notion that people in Washington or Sacramento should decide what crops we grow is literally and figuratively nuts.

As we all know, there are no easy solutions or quick fixes. There are many elements to consider and even more players pulling for their piece of the proverbial water pie. It is my sincere hope that the governor's Executive Order will wake up the rest of California and our nation and leave no doubt that the only viable path forward is joining together statewide to fix our water system and to keep California on the path to prosperity.

We in the Valley represent 4 million of the state's 38 million people. Past experience tells us that until a majority of Southern Californians and those who live in the Bay Area understand that their water is at risk, politically we will continue to have the same problems in making the necessary changes.

We must act now, before this devastating drought becomes catastrophic. Our climate is changing, and it should be clear to all that the status quo is not sustainable.

Rep. Jim Costa, D-Fresno, represents California's 16th District, which includes all of Merced County and portions of Fresno and Madera counties.

(2) Congressional Delegation “Dear Colleague” Letter

- To view the letter, click on [4-13-15 Congressional “Dear Colleague” Letter](#).

(3) CQ/Roll Call Article on California’s Drought

We thought you might be interested in a CQ/Roll Call article from April 19, covering the most recent Congressional state-of-play on California water legislation, and the prominent role that House Majority Leader **Kevin McCarthy** plays in the process.

[McCarthy Uses Bully Pulpit to Spotlight California Drought](#)

By [Emma Dumain](#) Posted at 5 a.m. on April 19



McCarthy has made the California drought a priority in Washington. (Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call File Photo)

Legislation targeting arcane water rules is not typically the stuff of legacy building for high-profile political figures.

But for House Majority Leader [Kevin McCarthy](#), shepherding through Congress a bill aimed at easing the water shortage in his home state — while taking down some federal regulations conservatives contend contributed to the crisis — would be a personal triumph years in the making.

If he succeeds, it will be thanks in large part to the time, energy and political capital the Californian has expended on the issue, from measures that stalled in previous sessions to this current push to address the

debilitating drought.

The difference this time is McCarthy is now the second-most powerful Republican in the House. And, as majority leader, he has a much bigger soapbox from which to proselytize about any issue.

“I’ve been talking about this since I’ve been whip, and even just a freshman member,” McCarthy told CQ Roll Call. “People have been talking about this, and we’ve been moving legislation about it, but it hasn’t gotten as much attention. So, part of my job is to help bring more attention. ... I think I have maybe more avenues for people to listen now.”

Perhaps most significantly, he now has primary discretion over the House calendar.

“We don’t have to ask somebody else to take it to the floor now,” McCarthy laughed.

Seated in his Capitol Hill office across from a giant modern painting of California's most famous conservative, President Ronald Reagan, McCarthy said he hoped to harness a bipartisan, bicameral coalition to rally around legislation to address the water crisis.

He holds regular meetings in his suite of offices with fellow California Republicans to discuss the emerging legislative framework, which could end up focusing on California or perhaps broadening out to other Western states. He also remains engaged with Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chairwoman [Lisa Murkowski](#), R-Alaska, and Sen. [Dianne Feinstein](#), D-Calif. (Major policy disagreements led to a communications breakdown between McCarthy and California's other Democratic senator, [Barbara Boxer](#).)

McCarthy acknowledges House lawmakers involved in the discussions could decide to move a House bill — setting up a situation where the Senate could pass a separate measure and then the two versions would be merged in a conference committee.

In that scenario, McCarthy might end up putting a bill on the floor that only has support from House Republicans; it would likely be a more conservative bill — especially since McCarthy and others in his party contend California's water shortage has been exacerbated by the Obama administration's Environmental Protection Agency.

California is in the midst of a record-setting drought, with straits so dire the state government has put mandatory water consumption restrictions into effect.

“In California, water has always been a major issue. The old saying goes, ‘whiskey’s for drinkin’, water’s for fightin’,’ so this has been going on for years,” McCarthy explained. “The problem is, it is such a worst-case scenario, because it’s a combination of government decisions, environmental decisions, and the lack of greater storage. So we could have been in a stronger position dealing with the drought today.”

McCarthy, who took over the GOP's No. 2 spot last summer, is the latest in a long line of congressional leaders who've used the bully pulpit to focus national attention on a particular issue.

In 2011, early in his first term as speaker, [John A. Boehner](#), R-Ohio, secured a floor vote on legislation he sponsored to restore funding to a Washington, D.C.-specific program to help local low-income children attend private and parochial schools, an interest dating back to his days as chairman of the Education and the Workforce Committee.

Democrats slammed Boehner's bill as exploitative of Congress' jurisdiction over D.C. and reignited a larger partisan battle over school vouchers. Ultimately, Boehner secured five years of funding for scholarships.

During [Nancy Pelosi](#)'s speakership, the California Democrat didn't hesitate to use her powerful title to advocate on behalf of local concerns, challenging the then-administrator of the EPA to

justify the decision to deny her home state its request to tighten rules on greenhouse-gas emissions.

In 2014, then-Majority Leader [Eric Cantor](#), R-Va., championed a bill already being crafted by Rep. [Gregg Harper](#), R-Miss., to end federal funding for party nominating conventions and use that money instead for pediatric research grants through the National Institutes of Health. Cantor gave the bill a public face, naming the measure for a 10-year-old girl from Virginia named Gabriella Miller, who died from an inoperable brain tumor while advocating for childhood cancer research.

Conservative Republicans wanted to see more offsets in the funding, and Democrats called the bill a ploy to obscure several years of dramatic GOP cuts to NIH funding under sequester. It ultimately proved harder to oppose the legislation, with its compelling narrative, than support it, and President Barack Obama signed it into law.

Cantor's name was never listed as the lead Republican sponsor of the bill in place of Harper, who praised his old colleague for making the bill become a reality.

"I want to give him all the credit in the world," Harper told CQ Roll Call. "It wouldn't have happened without him."

Like his predecessor, McCarthy said he doesn't need to have his name on the bill he's pushing.

In the last days of the 113th Congress, McCarthy scheduled a floor vote for an emergency California drought relief bill. It passed the House but didn't get considered in the Senate — and it bore the name of then-freshman Rep. [David Valadao](#), R-Calif.

"This issue, there are so many people involved. If I could help put more people together to find a solution, that's part of my job," McCarthy said. "I don't care for my name to be on the title. You won't find a bill with my name on it. But you'll find my fingerprints all over it."