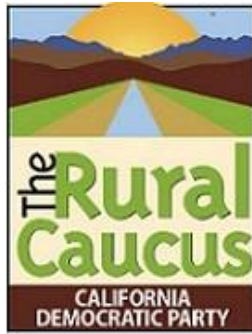


September 18, 2021



Dear Fellow Rural Caucus Members (and Allies),

I am pleased and proud to share with you, thanks to Caucus Secretary Katie Jaycox, [the minutes](#) from our last meeting during the CDP Summer Executive Board. That meeting now feels like it was a century ago. And I wanted to provide an update on what has happened since.

First and foremost, we defeated the **Recall** ... and we wrote the playbook for 2022. #foreverorganizing. It is interesting to now look at the map of how the voting went by county:

<https://electionresults.sos.ca.gov/returns/maps/governor-recall>

Congratulations to Nevada, Alpine and Mono Counties for doing so well! Fresno and Inyo are competitive with a significant number of outstanding ballots. Merced is tight but hopefully will hold.

### **Covid**

It is very encouraging that California has the lowest transmission rate in the nation – one very good reason why the Recall was defeated, but rural Northern California (i.e., Butte, Shasta, and Tehama) are still hard hit and hospitals in the San Joaquin Valley are stretched thin.

<https://covid19.ca.gov/state-dashboard/#county-statewide>

### **Redistricting**

The Redistricting Commission is expected to soon begin map drawing based on public testimony and the census numbers. The Commission has sued California to extend the deadline to submit final maps to the Secretary of State to mid-January 2022. Rural Caucus members should make sure that our voices are heard. If you have questions about the redistricting process, call Debra Broner at 805 206 7809 or email [deborahbroner@gmail.com](mailto:deborahbroner@gmail.com).

### **Wildfire Insurance**

**Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara** updated us on SB 11, which extends the FAIR Plan (insurance of last resort) to agricultural properties, is now in effect. He talked about finding ways for fire mitigation efforts to be taken into account to the positive for getting insurance. It was poignant that wildfires were raging at the time of our meeting.

### **Wildfire Mitigation**

**Senator Mike McGuire** spoke about new funding for wildfire resources on the ground and since our meeting the Legislature approved a budget package that would guarantee nearly \$1 billion in wildfire prevention funding for the current fiscal year and require at least \$200 million annually for the next six years, which McGuire calls the biggest investment ever in the state. Still needed is a long term strategic plan.

### **Water**

Clean and Affordable Drinking Water - Phil Grosse

This was our primary focus to get the Clean Drinking Water for All Act passed in 2019. The bill allocated \$130 million a year for ten years to improve failing water systems around the state. Since implementation, \$477 million has been committed to 126 water districts, serving 374,000 Californians or 43% of the people the state water board has identified as our “human right to water population”. The water projects are concentrated in the Central Valley, (i.e., Stanislaus, Fresno, Merced Counties). The monies were to come out of the Cap-and-Trade Program

This year, the state allocated an additional, onetime \$650 million to the Safer Water Program as part of the budget.

**Joaquin Esquivel, Chair of the State Water Board**, spoke about his focus on failing drinking water systems, especially in drought, adapting to climate change and a California that is becoming dryer and dryer. He is also looking for long term solutions for groundwater recharge.

We also heard about nonprofit efforts from **Tom Collishaw, CEO Self Help Enterprises**, serving the San Joaquin Valley. They have assisted and developed over 15 thousand units of affordable housing and have replaced and financed 600 wells. The key to their continued work is their partnership with the State Water Board and the Safer Water Funds.

Our goal as a Caucus is to get the legislature to secure that funding as a line item in the budget so as not to be reliant on the cap-and-trade market, which is prone to volatility.

Our two Rural Caucus water mavens are Phil Grosse ([philgrosse@gmail.com](mailto:philgrosse@gmail.com)) and Michael Saunders ([miachoftheshire@gmail.com](mailto:miachoftheshire@gmail.com)).

### **Broadband**

Our greatest work this year has been our unrelenting, successful role in closing the digital divide. It has been a magnificent team effort.

**House Speaker Anthony Rendon** spoke at our meeting saying we have accomplished more in the last eight months around broadband than in his previous eight years as Speaker. Covid exposed the full extent of the need for reliable, affordable broadband, especially in rural communities.

This year's budget provides \$3.25 billion to build, operate and maintain essential statewide, open access, middle mile infrastructure. It also includes \$2 billion dollars to connect houses and businesses with local networks (so called "last mile" infrastructure) and \$750 million for a loan loss reserve to support local governments and nonprofit broadband projects.

Now the work of implementation is underway. <https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/industries-and-topics/internet-and-phone/2021-broadband-implementation-for-california>

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) is meeting weekly with the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) on draft maps. The newly formed nine-member Broadband Advisory Committee, which includes State Senator Mike McGuire and Assembly Member Jim Wood, meets the third Wednesday of each month. The next meeting is October 20. <https://cdt.ca.gov/middle-mile-advisory-committee/> Public comment is accepted.

Since our Caucus meeting, the four broadband policy bills we support were passed in the legislature and are on the Governor's desk – **AB 14 (Aguiar-Curry)**, **SB 4 (Gonzalez)**, **AB 40 (Wood)**, and **SB 28 (Caballero)**. The deadline for the Governor to sign bills is October 10.

### **Looking Ahead:**

For your calendar, the CDP **Fall Executive Board Meeting** will be the week of November 15 and will be virtual. **Convention** is tentatively planned for the first weekend of March in Los Angeles and could be in-person.

Our next focus is updating the Rural Plank for the **2022 Party Platform**. Our very own Regional Chair Elizabeth Betancourt is on the Platform Committee. The deadline for submitting testimony online is Friday, November 19, 2021, at 5:00 pm.

Please know how much I appreciate you and all that you do.

With all my very best, Joy

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