



State of the Rural Caucus

Dear Fellow Rural Caucus Members, 2019 is off to a very fast and positive start for the Rural Caucus:

It was very exciting that Governor Newsom gave a shout out to rural California in his inaugural address, saying, **"I recognize that many in our rural communities believe that Sacramento doesn't care about them — doesn't even really see them," he said. "I see you. I care about you. And I will represent you with pride."**

A week later he took his entire cabinet on a bus trip to Stanislaus County to talk with residents about safe and affordable drinking water.

His budget calls for \$193 million to implement California's human right to water law. It revives an idea that died in the Legislature last year and includes an under \$1 per month tax on drinking water to help disadvantaged communities afford the operations and maintenance of water systems once they are returned to compliance. Opposition by the Water Districts is already mounting.

Our path is clear: We need to garner support in the Legislature to get it on the Governor's desk. Our first **call to action** is for each of us in the Caucus to contact our elected officials to express our support to deliver on safe, affordable drinking water for all ... **this year.**

Here's a link that will help you find your elected(s). Please take a minute to call them today and deliver this message, or something similar in your own words:

"I understand that the Legislature is formulating bills to provide safe and affordable drinking water to one million Californians who today do not enjoy this basic human right. I want to encourage Senator _____ (or Assemblymember _____) to lend their support. It's California's shame—not to mention a violation of our Constitution—that so many of our fellow citizens cannot drink the water that comes out of their tap."

Phil Grosse from our Rural Caucus Water Policy Discussion Group and I have started carrying this message in person to:

- State Senator Mike McGuire, and learned that Sen. Bill Monning is working on a new bill (replacing his SB 623 that was defeated in the Legislature last year) that is in the negotiation stages. Sen Anna Caballo is also engaged and I spoke with her policy director Peter Ansel.
- Assemblyman Eduardo Garcia's Chief of Staff Carlos Gonzalez and Catherine Freeman, Chief Consultant for Assembly Committee on Water, Parks and Wildlife. And Shea Logan, Legislative Director for Asm. Heath Flora. Garcia and Flora have been charged by Speaker Rendon to bring forward a bill on the Assembly side.
- Jonathan Nelson, Policy Director, Community Water Center, who emphasized the need for not just infrastructure, but ongoing funding for operations and maintenance, which was the intent (and source of controversy) of Sen. Monning's bill, referenced above. Jonathan also advises we pay attention to agriculture and meet with Western Growers and the Farm Bureau.

We learned that Asm. Garcia is co-chairing an [informational hearing](#) on safe and affordable drinking water [February 6](#) in Sacramento, which I hope to attend, as there will be an opportunity to make public comments.

It's worth noting that Asm. Flora is a Republican. Phil and I feel that ensuring safe and affordable drinking water to one million Californians in need is a non-partisan issue. Asm. Flora's district is primarily rural; we should work with everyone who agrees that all Californians deserve this most basic human right.

Our next steps are to get appointments with Asm. Jim Wood, Asm. Marc Levine and State Sen. Bill Dodd, to continue to build support.

We have much to accomplish this year:

- Broadband Equity
- Fire Resiliency
- Lowell Young's resolution to bring PG&E under state control
- Turn more attention to sheriffs' races – especially those who do not support the State's sanctuary law
- Growing the Caucus membership and building momentum
- Ratification of amended Bylaws and officer elections
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But clean drinking water is one issue we do not want to be talking about in 2020.

With all my very best,



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