



February 12, 2011

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein,

The Brown administration has hit the ground running in an effort to resolve California's long-term water issues. As you are aware, the California Legislature passed a comprehensive package of bills that were signed into law to ensure that the dual goals of water supply reliability and Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta ecosystem restoration would be met.

We are actively engaged in pursuit of these goals and believe that only through this inclusive process will we make significant long-lasting progress. In the early weeks of the new administration, we have been meeting with stakeholders to advance our mutual interests and with federal officials on outstanding legal issues.

As California's senior senator and a leader of our water efforts in California, you have devoted countless hours to help settle these difficult issues. As a result of your leadership real progress has been and continues to be made.

I write to express our concerns about proposed language in the House of Representatives Continuing Resolution to defund, through the appropriations process, ongoing work on the Delta Smelt and Salmon Biological Opinions, the Klamath River watershed and other agreements including the San Joaquin River Settlement.

Regarding the dispute over federal biological opinions, the Natural Resources Agency has worked very closely with federal officials in the Departments of the Interior and Commerce to resolve many of the most vexing issues in this litigation. We are hopeful of a reasonable settlement of the Delta smelt case, and we are working with the Department of Commerce to find reasonable middle ground in the salmon case. Obviously, the language in the House of Representatives proposal would make further negotiations impossible. Worse yet, the resolution as currently written, would not resolve the ongoing litigation nor move us toward the twin goals of water supply reliability and ecosystem health.

On the San Joaquin River, the settlement you helped negotiate was fair to all sides, and accepted by nearly all parties. Natural Resources Agency department staff has been working tirelessly alongside Bureau of Reclamation staff and other parties to help implement the settlement. If the House language were to be adopted, the matter would end up in court again, to the detriment of all Californians.

I urge you to oppose the House language, and to allow the present negotiating processes to continue to what I am confident will be successful conclusions.

Best personal regards,

John Laird
California Secretary for Natural Resources