

June 14, 2017

Chairman Thad Cochran
Vice Chairman Patrick Leahy
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 25015

Dear Chairman Cochran and Vice Chairman Leahy,

As leaders at western water utilities and on behalf of the members of WaterNow Alliance and the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies, we write to ask for your support for increased funding for the Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART Grants Program in the Interior FY 2018 appropriations bill. This modest program provides vitally needed and innovative support for effective water management throughout the West. Specifically, we request that you fund the Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART Grants Program at \$30 million and pass a multi-year extension of Section 9504 of the SECURE Water Act (42 U.S.C. 10364) to ensure the water-saving program continues without interruption.

Public water utilities comprise over 80% of U.S. municipal water providers. Our ability to provide clean and reliable drinking water supplies faces growing challenges from drought, stormwater runoff, aging infrastructure, rising costs, and more. The Colorado River provides drinking water to over 35 million people, supplies water to over 5 million acres of irrigated land, and supports an estimated \$1 trillion dollars in total economic activity – including a thriving recreation industry worth over \$26 billion dollars annually. But by 2060, the Bureau of Reclamation anticipates water demands will exceed available supplies by over 3 million acre-feet.

The WaterSMART Grants Program saves an estimated 1 million acre-feet annually, providing enough water for over 4.5 million people. Nonetheless, there is a significant amount of unmet savings potential — only 1 in 5 grant applications receive funds. A \$30 million appropriation will leverage many additional millions in non-federal funds and make significant progress toward closing the water supply gap across the West.

It is vital to continue to fund and support effective federal programs for water management solutions in the West. Effective collaboration between federal, state, and local governments and tribes is required to more efficiently administer water in the region. Therefore, we urge you to increase funding for the WaterSMART Grants Program to the authorized level of \$30 million.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



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Executive Director
WaterNow Alliance



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CC: Chairman Alexander, Energy and Water Development Subcommittee
Ranking Member Feinstein, Energy and Water Development Subcommittee