November ___, 2026

The Honorable John Kennedy
Chair
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
Senate Committee on Appropriations
127 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Congressionally Directed Spending for Kern County Environmental Infrastructure

Dear Senator Kennedy and Staff:

As the Chair of the Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, we are requesting your assistance in reducing a currently unnecessary appropriation request by Honorable Senators Adam Schiff and Alex Padilla of California. Specifically, both Senators have requested $5,000,000 in Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) for a Kern County Environmental Infrastructure (EI) project previously authorized in WRDA 2024. Significant local opposition and controversy over the proposed project, including several lawsuits, has negated support from our local Congressman Vince Fong, who is rightfully withholding support until legal battles are completed and the community coalesces around a project or projects to address future water supply in our area.

Background: A relatively new local agency, the Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority (GA), has prematurely determined that a 50-mile pipeline (Imported Water Pipeline) is needed to address local aquifer decline in the Indian Wells Valley. This pipeline is estimated to cost $380,000,000 for construction and another $10,000,000 in annual operational costs. For our small valley with approximately 40,000 residents, this will ultimately result in doubling the already high cost of water.

Our objections to these CDS requests stem from a number of ongoing issues that must be resolved prior to commencing such a large-scale and costly project. These include, but are not limited to, the ongoing comprehensive groundwater adjudication lawsuit currently underway which will ultimately determine if the proposed pipeline is needed, or whether other less costly solutions are available. Project proponents have yet to even submit a complete NEPA document to the BLM for review, a process that must be completed before construction can begin (why is the proponent asking for construction funding at this time?). And, despite collecting an amount

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approaching $20,000,000 from local residents since 2021, the GA has failed to purchase any water for the proposed pipeline to transport.

Despite significant opposition, ongoing litigation, and lack of imported water rights, the GA continues to advocate that this project is the "only" way to achieve sustainability, and thus WRDA funds are needed immediately. If the CDS is granted, the Imported Water Pipeline is considered "shovel ready", moves past the "New Start" requirement for the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) and eases access to additional WRDA funding, even though the need for the pipeline has yet to be shown. While the GA continues to push for the Imported Water Pipeline, its lobbyist, Capitol Core Group's proposed budget contemplates ceasing its search for imported water in 2027, stating:

> "several outstanding litigation issues remain that may impact the quantity of water needed by IWVGA. Absent a specific quantity, Capitol Core is unable to complete negotiations and obtain exact pricing on water purchases. On the recommendation of the Authority's counsel, we have placed this activity on hold and not included it in the 2027 proposed budget."

What is the urgency for the Imported Water Pipeline when the GA doesn't even know if it needs imported water? Or, if it even has access to water?

The House version of the Energy and Water Appropriations Act of 2027 does not contain a Community Project Funding (CPF) request for the Imported Water Pipeline from Congressman Fong despite a request to do so. We understand that the opportunity to negotiate these CDS requests will occur when the reconciliation of the House and Senate versions of the Energy and Water Appropriations Act of 2027 occurs. We request that you, as Chair, reach out to the members of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee for Energy and Water Development and request that the two CDS requests submitted by Senators Alex Padilla and Adam Schiff for the Imported Water Pipeline be declined in the 2027 EWAA.

This letter is not intended to prevent further design or completion of the necessary environmental reviews should the Imported Water Pipeline ultimately be the only solution to sustainability, but it is a request to prevent the ACOE from moving this project from the planning-if-needed state, into a 'New Start" designation formally starting the project.

If we can assist in any way with your staff in understanding the importance of defeating the GA's request for these CDS funds, we are available at your convenience. Any and all assistance in this regard is greatly appreciated. Should you have questions about this request please contact ???

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Sincerely,
Indian Wells Valley Water Association (IWVWA)

x_____
Ron Kicinski
President, Indian Wells Valley Water District Board of Directors

x_____
Sara Rizzardini
Immediate Past President, Ridgecrest Area Association of Realtors

x_____
Scott O'Neil
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Cc:

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