

## March 8, 2007: Healthy Communities Water Supply Act of 2007

The Honorable Loretta Sanchez

### HEALTHY COMMUNITIES WATER SUPPLY ACT OF 2007

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Mr. Chairman, I rise to support H.R. 700, Healthy Communities Water Supply Act of 2007, a reauthorization of a Pilot Program for Increasing Usable Water Supply. As you well know, this Pilot Program for increasing usable water supply was authorized for 2002 through 2004, but the previous majority never appropriated any funds and let the authorization expire.

I want to take this opportunity to remind my colleagues just how important it is to supplement existing water supplies by providing reliable high-quality sources of water, particularly in areas of the country that are under the threat of the desert. In California, especially in Orange County, the population is increasing; so is the need for water.

For over 15 years, the Orange County Water District has maintained a Groundwater Replenishment System designed to reuse advanced treated wastewater to recharge the County's groundwater aquifers and basin. This will help them meet the annual water needs of over 144,000 families that keep growing. Also, the county is barely 3 miles from the coast and has an added need to protect the Basin from further degradation due to seawater intrusion. To this end, the OCWD under its Phase I project provides over 72 million gallons of water per day to replenish its aquifers as well as protect them from seawater intrusion by pumping water through injection wells. This phase will end in September, 2007.

In Phase II of the project, they will be able to process over 250 million gallons of wastewater per day and have enough to support the recharge effort and combat seawater intrusion. There are currently 30 such injection wells that can pump water up to 60-100 feet depth.

The beauty of this project is the collaboration the Water District has with the County's Sanitation District (OCSD) who provides the wastewater that would have been pumped out to the ocean thereby which would have deprived the Water District of the water that is now being reclaimed for the replenishment of groundwater aquifers. And the State Health Department provides the oversight, to make sure water quality is maintained.

With projects like this, communities such as Orange County will benefit tremendously. This OCGW project has attracted experts in public water management systems from other States and countries (Japan, Korea, and Taiwan) who come to Orange County to look at this tertiary system and learn from it. So, this is of national and even international significance. Also, projects like the OCGWR provides for the necessary investments to ensure water security for the future.

This bill will help improve water availability and quality by authorizing a total of \$125 million to fund projects that increase usable water supply by encouraging innovation in water reclamation, reuse and conservation. The Orange County Water Reclamation Project is a perfect example of such a project and I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 700.