

June 25, 2004- Sanchez Ensures Orange County Gets Money it Deserves

Rep. Sanchez Co-Sponsors Legislation Honoring President Reagan

SANCHEZ ENSURES THAT ORANGE COUNTY GETS MONEY IT DESERVES

Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez recently undertook a public effort to make sure Orange County and surrounding communities receive more than \$10 million that the Army Corps of Engineers owes the jurisdictions. The money, taken out of the the Santa Ana River Mainstem project account, is being used for various other Corps projects.

The House Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill for fiscal 2005 would require the Army Corps of Engineers to seek congressional approval to reprogram money among different projects. On the floor of the House of Representatives, Loretta elicited a promise from Republican leadership that money could still be put back into the Santa Ana River project, even under these new requirements.

The following exchange took place on the House floor during debate of the Energy and Water Appropriations bill:

SANCHEZ of California: Madam Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

Madam Chairman, I rise in strong support of the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act, H.R. 4614. I would, however, like to ask the distinguished chairman about language in the bill report that would require the Army Corps of Engineers to seek congressional approval whenever the Corps reprograms funds for major water development programs.

My district in Orange County, California, would be particularly affected by any changes to the reprogramming policy. In recent years, the Army Corps of Engineers reprogrammed between \$10 million to \$12 million that Congress had originally appropriated to shore up flood protection along the Santa Ana River in my area.

We are now in dire need of that money to continue building up our flood protection for the growing urban communities in Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties.

Without the successful completion of the project, the corps estimates that over 3.35 million people would be endangered and that it could probably destroy up to \$15 billion in property value if we do not get that project completed.

So I am asking the distinguished chairman, will the Army Corps continue to have the authority to ship money back to those ongoing projects from which it had previously borrowed? I understand there is report language directing the court to return funds to appropriated programs. I would like to know, would this apply to the Santa Ana River Mainstem project?

Mr. HOBSON. Madam Chairman, will the gentlewoman yield?

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. I yield to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. HOBSON. Madam Chairman, I thank the gentlewoman for her support and her inquiry.

I would assure her that nothing in the bill or the report would prevent the Army Corps of Engineers from returning funds to donor projects. In fact, as the gentlewoman has observed, the bill report includes language that specifically instructs the corps to be as diligent in returning funds as it has been in reprogramming them. Again, I thank the gentlewoman from California for her inquiry and hope this clarification has worked to address her concerns.

The ranking member and I have undertaken a very strong look at the reprogrammings in the Corps of Engineers, much more so than in past years, and we are making them report to us, and we are signing off on them, and we are watching these much more diligently than we had been in the past, and we think it will work out much better in the future.

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Madam Chairman, I know that the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Hobson) as the other subcommittee had been able to tighten things up also, and I appreciate the new policy that the gentleman is trying to move forward. Again, I am just concerned, as this is a major project for almost 4 million people in that area, and we are at that point where we are really going to get a lot of it done, and we need those funds to be brought back in.

Mr. HOBSON. Madam Chairman, I agree.