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League of Women Voters & Sierra Club to Oppose Potential Water Bond Unless Fiscal Oversight, Environmental Protection Ensured

Sacramento –The League of Women Voters of California and Sierra Club California have sent a hard-hitting letter to leaders of the California State Senate and Assembly indicating concern about the direction of current water bond negotiations. Leaders of both organizations noted that they would actively oppose any water bond presented to voters that does not include clear parameters for fiscal oversight as well as reasonable environmental protections.

The State Legislature first planned to place a bond before voters in the November 2010 election to support water quality and water security improvements in California. The bond was subsequently removed from the ballot by legislators when it became clear that the \$11.14 billion bond would not secure the needed votes from the public. The bond is currently scheduled for the November 2014 ballot.

Meanwhile, legislators have been struggling to develop a replacement bond that would not carry the same problems and opposition as the original bond proposal. This week, a new version of SB 848 (Wolk) that now includes significant portions of the original bond measure has been introduced.

“The draft replacement bond circulating through legislative circles would be a bad deal for taxpayers,” said Jennifer A. Waggoner, president of the League of Women Voters of California. “We are in full support of a water bond that provides reasonable fiscal oversight and balances environmental, agricultural and urban water needs in the state. The proposed measure misses that mark.”

The redrafted SB 848 recently negotiated by the legislature favors new dam projects over groundwater storage and water recycling and establishes a funding structure that would allow massive publically funded dam projects to proceed without ongoing legislative oversight.

“Sustainable water management in California will require a shift to local resiliency and self-sufficiency, including increased investment in groundwater storage and management,” added Kathryn Phillips, director of Sierra Club California. “We will not sit by while private interests manipulate the system to support an outdated approach to water storage that does not substantially improve the state’s ability to manage water on behalf of people and wildlife.”

Please contact Sev Williams at sev@publicgoodpr.com or 510-336-9566 for a copy of the letter submitted to Senate pro Tem Darrell Steinberg and Speaker Toni Atkins.

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