



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Senate Majority Leader Hertzberg proposes law to protect access to clean drinking water for the next big drought

SACRAMENTO, Calif. - Senate Majority Leader Bob Hertzberg (D-Van Nuys) today introduced legislation that would help ensure safe, clean, and affordable drinking water for vulnerable communities at risk of being impacted when the next drought hits.

During the 2012-2016 drought, almost 12,000 Californians ran out of water. That historic drought served as an alarming indicator of California's warmer future, and we expect droughts to continue to increase in severity and frequency, especially in rural communities throughout California, including the hard-hit Central Valley.

SB 971 would enact the California Department of Water Resources' drought recommendations for 1) identifying small water suppliers and rural communities that may be at risk of drought and water shortage and 2) creating contingency plans for small water suppliers of fewer than 3,000 connections as well as communities that rely on private wells.

"Our changing climate – or as Governor Brown called it, our 'new normal' – requires that we find solutions for a more sustainable water future," Senator Hertzberg said. "But we can't pursue those solutions on the backs of our most vulnerable communities. This bill establishes critical tools to help prevent catastrophic impacts on drinking water for areas most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change."

"Droughts impact low-income, small and rural communities the hardest," said Susana De Anda, Executive Director and Co-Founder of Community Water Center, which is co-sponsoring the bill along with the California Municipal Utilities Association (CMUA). "There's this gap of drinking water accessibility that needs to be closed. That's why this bill is so critical. It will require California to bridge the drinking water gap by having plans in place for vulnerable communities throughout the state, including the Central Valley."

In an effort to build a more drought-resilient future, the Legislature approved SB 606 (Hertzberg, 2018) and AB 1668 (Friedman, 2018), which set water efficiency standards and goals for urban communities and water suppliers.

While both measures made major improvements to drought planning for urban areas, a parallel framework is needed for small and rural systems. Currently, 1.6 million Californians live in areas served by private domestic wells. If another drought occurs as severe as the last one, more than 4,500 domestic wells in the Central Valley would be impacted. The cost to mitigate this damage would be more than \$115 million. This presents a serious public health crisis and undermines California's efforts to secure the state's policy of the Human Right to Water for all Californians.

"California water agencies are committed to providing safe and reliable water to their local communities," said Danielle Blacet-Hyden, CMUA Director for Water. "This bill will help smaller communities more effectively plan for future droughts."

"We applaud Senator Hertzberg for standing up for clean drinking water for all Californians," De Anda added. "Water is a human right. All Californians must have access to safe, clean, and affordable drinking water."

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Majority Leader Bob Hertzberg represents nearly 1 million San Fernando Valley residents of Senate District 18, which includes part of Burbank and the following communities in Los Angeles: Arleta, Granada Hills, Hansen Dam, Lake View Terrace, Mission Hills, North Hills, North Hollywood, part of Northridge, Pacoima, Panorama City, Sherman Oaks, Studio City, part of Sun Valley, Sylmar, Toluca Lake, Valley Glen, Valley Village, Van Nuys, the City of San Fernando and Universal City. See a district map at <http://sd18.senate.ca.gov/district>. After serving in the Assembly from 1996-2002, including two years as Speaker, Hertzberg invested in solar, wind and electric-car projects; and worked for structural changes in government through the Think Long Committee of California. Learn more at www.senate.ca.gov/hertzberg

Community Water Center (CWC) believes all communities should have access to safe, clean, and affordable water. Founded in 2006, CWC works toward realizing the Human Right to Water for all Californians through education, organizing, and advocacy. For more information, visit <https://www.communitywatercenter.org>

The California Municipal Utilities Association (CMUA) represents 71 publicly owned electric utilities and water agencies statewide. Together, CMUA members provide water service to 70 percent of Californians and electric service to 25 percent of the state. For more information, visit <https://www.cmua.org>