

For Immediate Release

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**BACKERS OF SAFE AND AFFORDABLE DRINKING WATER FUND APPLAUD RE-INTRODUCTION
OF SAFE DRINKING WATER LEGISLATION AND URGE SWIFT VOTE**

SACRAMENTO -- Governor Brown and lawmakers have introduced bipartisan consensus legislation (SB 844 and SB 845, authored by Senator Monning with Senator Vidak as Principal Co-Author) to solve California's long-standing drinking water crisis. The legislation builds upon the original proposal for a Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund, with changes made to ensure broad support and effective implementation – because California families with toxic water cannot afford to wait any longer.

The bill has been amended in two key ways:

- **Changes the mandatory safe drinking water fee to a voluntary program**, giving Californians the ability to opt out if they so choose, similar to other existing models such as community choice aggregators. Funding will be used to help disadvantaged communities afford to create, operate and maintain critical drinking water treatment. The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) will also work with stakeholders to develop best practices and other measures deemed necessary to meet the unique needs of low-income Californians as part of the voluntary program.
- **Preserves the mandatory fees and regulatory implementation provisions on agricultural operations and dairies**, while increasing the fertilizer mill fee from the original proposal. Fees are set to collect a fair amount of revenue in proportion to the costs to treat water impacted by nitrate.

Taken together, this safe drinking water legislation represents a major step forward towards finally achieving the California promise of safe, clean, and affordable drinking water for all.

Below is a joint statement from supporters of the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund:

“California is on the verge of a historic step forward to provide safe and affordable drinking water for the estimated one million Californians with toxic tap water. After extensive deliberations with lawmakers and stakeholders, Governor Brown and Senator Monning have introduced a consensus proposal in SB 844 (Monning) and SB 845 (Monning) that builds upon the original Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund. We remain in strong support and appreciate the thoughtfulness and deliberation that informed this revised legislation. We also appreciate the bipartisan champions who are leading this effort. And we believe the diversity of strong support from environmental justice, environmental, public health, business, agricultural, labor, local government and water leaders speaks to the strength and urgency of this proposal. We urge a swift vote so that we can finally achieve the California promise of safe, clean, affordable and accessible water for all.”

For more information, please visit fundsafewaterca.org.

Below are individual statements from just some of the many supporters of the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund.

Dolores Huerta

"I support the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund. More than a million Californians are being forced to take a risk each time they drink water from the faucet. This is an injustice and a disgrace in the richest state in the nation. I'm calling on the Legislature to join me in supporting Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund!"

Community Water Center: Laurel Firestone, Co-Founder & Co-Executive Director

"For decades, our communities have been given the unacceptable choice of drinking contaminated water from the tap or purchasing costly alternatives. Now, for the first time, we are within reach of a real solution in California and our legislature must act by passing the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund. This Fund will provide critical resources for drinking water solutions urgently needed in our state. Local community leaders impacted by unsafe water continue to lead the way of an unprecedented group of stakeholders supporting this solution including environmental justice, public health, business, and agriculture. We can't let this opportunity pass -- our families are depending on it."

Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability: Phoebe Seaton, Co-Director

"California is so close to rectifying this decades-long wrong, this chasm in our image of health, well-being, and equity. We stand this week with the million Californians who still live each day without safe drinking water and ask that the legislature -- north and south, urban and rural, blue and red -- make safe drinking water a reality."

Clean Water Action: Dan Howells, California State Director

"It is unconscionable that nearly one million California residents must risk their health just by drinking from their own faucet. In the next two weeks, the State Legislature will be able to change that, by approving SB 844 and SB 845, authored by Senator Monning."

Water Foundation: Wade Crowfoot, CEO

"Right now, one in 40 Californians risks exposure to arsenic, nitrate and other dangerous chemicals every time they turn on the tap. We have the laws and tools to fix this. We just need the political will. I applaud Governor Brown and the many legislative and community leaders that have developed a bipartisan solution to our long-standing drinking water pollution problem, and urge lawmakers to approve the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund this year so every family in the state can count on clean water in their homes, schools and workplaces."

NextGen America: Arnie Sowell, Vice President of California Policy

"Access to clean and affordable drinking water is a universal human right -- and California has the responsibility to deliver on that right for everyone in our state. The people of California are watching, and as a progressive leader, California needs to do more to live up to that standard."

This month, our representatives have an opportunity to show their commitment to environmental justice and equality by passing SB 844 and SB 845.”

California Environmental Justice Alliance: Gladys Limon, Executive Director

“Safe and affordable drinking water is a human right. Today, however, more than 1 million Californians cannot drink or cook with water from their taps. We are proud to be part of a broad coalition demanding healthy water for all in California, which is a cornerstone of a just society. We urge the legislature to fulfill this promise by taking swift action to create the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund.”

Silicon Valley Leadership Group: Mike Mielke, Senior Vice President

“Far too many Californians lack access to safe, clean drinking water. This is a shameful problem, especially for the 5th largest economy in the world. California law recognizes the right to “safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water adequate for human consumption, cooking, and sanitary purposes.” After years of deliberation and with fair and workable compromise at the heart of the legislative package, we are finally on the cusp of making this human right to water a reality for all Californians. We must make the most of this opportunity and pass SB 844 and SB 845.”

Agricultural Council of California: Emily Rooney, President

“We are wholeheartedly committed to solving this crucial drinking water issue this year. We remain dedicated, along Governor Brown and over 140 other groups and community partners, to solving this ongoing problem for low-income and disadvantaged communities throughout the state. As the Sac Bee Editorial Board said on June 4, ‘This is 21st century California. There is simply no excuse for water that isn’t safe.’”

California Water Service: Justin Skarb, Director of Community Affairs and Government Relations

“It is long past time for every Californian to have access to safe, reliable, and affordable drinking water. As one of California’s largest water utilities, we believe we must all accept responsibility to address the current divide between those who have safe drinking water and those that do not. The creation of the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund is an important step toward achieving that goal.”

Environmental Defense Fund: Pablo Garza, California Political Director, Ecosystems

“Passing this legislation will ensure that all Californians have access to clean and affordable drinking water. It is unconscionable to delay any longer. Clean water is a fundamental right and key element to making all California communities more resilient in the face of climate change.”

Western Growers: Dave Puglia, Executive Vice-President

“By passing these measures, the Legislature can deliver on the promise of clean drinking water for all Californians and provide a measure of certainty to the family farmers who sustain the economies of the regions most affected by these challenges.”

American Heart Association: Dr. Sanchez-Mata, American Heart Association

“To improve cardiovascular health, a key priority for the American Heart Association is to encourage populations to replace their sugar-sweetened beverage consumption with healthier beverage choices like water. Creating a system that provides safe and affordable water is an important strategy to increase consumption of water and decrease consumption of unhealthy sugary drinks. We are proud to support these bills to ensure safe and affordable drinking water for children and families in order to safeguard the health of our communities.”

Western United Dairymen: Lucas Deniz, President of Western United Dairymen

“California dairy families are committed to being an engaged partner for the communities we work in and serve. Providing the citizens of the state with certainty to drinking water access is a fundamental responsibility we all have.”