



## **Senate Bill 971**

### **Drought Resilient Communities Act**

*Introduced on February 11, 2020*

#### **SUMMARY**

SB 971 facilitates better coordination and drought preparedness for small and rural communities and water suppliers by making various changes to their local drought and water shortage contingency plans.

#### **ISSUE**

California experienced the worst drought on record from 2012 to 2016, estimated to be the driest four-year period in the last 450 years. The severity was unprecedented and significantly impacted the environment, agricultural water supplies, and urban water supplies. Over 480,000 people relying on public water systems were affected – many households relying on domestic wells were left without running water for extended periods of time. Low-income, small and rural communities were struck particularly hard – more than 75% of the drought-impacted public water systems were small, serving 1,000 connections or fewer.

Even as the historic drought lifted in 2017, it served as an alarming indicator of California’s warmer future. Climate models predict that droughts will only continue to increase in severity and frequency. 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 make major improvements to drought planning for urban areas, a parallel framework is needed for small and rural systems.

Currently, there are varying levels of water contingency planning and coverage across counties for small water suppliers and self-supplied communities. The disproportionate impact on these communities will leave hundreds of thousands of people at risk of going without water to meet their basic household and drinking water needs during the next drought. Access to water is a human right and no one should go without running water.

#### **SB 971 (Hertzberg)**

SB 971 (Hertzberg) protects vulnerable communities and small water suppliers from drought by improving local planning, increasing data collection, updating emergency responses, and improving statewide coordination. These tools are critical for communities most at risk and will help prevent catastrophic impacts on drinking water for areas most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

#### **SUPPORT**

California Municipal Utilities Association (CMUA) (Sponsor)  
Community Water Center (Sponsor)