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INLAND EMPIRE GROUPS PRESS LEGISLATORS TO SUPPORT BILLS PROTECTING AREA'S WATER, ENVIRONMENT FROM FEDERAL THREATS

(Riverside, CA) – A coalition of Inland Empire citizen and environmental groups today called on the area's state legislators to support a package of bills designed to protect the region's water and natural resources from federal attempts to weaken environmental safeguards.

The Inland Empire Waterkeeper, the Riverside-based grassroots nonprofit water quality group, joined by the Hispanic Access Foundation and the Vet Voice Foundation, called on Assemblymembers Jose Medina (R-Riverside), Sabrina Cervantes (D-Riverside), Eduardo Garcia (D-Coachella), Eloise Gomez Reyes (D-San Bernardino), GOP leader Chad Mayes (R-Yucca Valley), Melissa Melendez (R-Lake Elsinore), and Freddie Rodriguez (D-Pomona) to support the "Preserve California" package pending in the state legislature.

"From cuts to EPA programs to lax regulations on cancer-causing chemicals, the Trump administration is continually bowing to industry at the cost of the health of the citizens of the Inland Empire," said Megan Brousseau, Inland Empire Waterkeeper Associate Director. "The Preserve California Package will ensure that we can defend ourselves against the rollback of bedrock clean air, water, climate and worker protections that California has long relied on to ensure our health. This legislation protects California against a future that would sacrifice the health and well-being of our community for the short-term gain of wealthy special interests."

"The Preserve California legislation is particularly important to the Inland Empire's Latino community, which makes up more than 40 percent of the total population," said Maite Arce, president and CEO of Hispanic Access Foundation. "This community believes we have a moral obligation to protect our land, air and water for future generations. These bills ensure that we have safe drinking water, access to public lands and tools to protect our environment."

"Veterans strongly believe we should protect the lands that we love," said Steve Dunwoody, California Director of Vet Voice Foundation. "The overwhelming majority of Californians, particularly here in the Inland Empire, join us in that sentiment. It's time for the California legislature to do all it can to strengthen our state's ability to protect our lands and water as the Trump Administration continues its all-out assault on our environment."

There are three bills in the package, said Brousseau:

- Senate Bill 49, the California Environmental Defense Act, makes current federal clean air, clean water, worker safety, and endangered species standards enforceable under state law, even if the federal government rolls back and weakens those standards. It also directs state environmental, public health, and worker safety agencies to take all actions within their authorities to ensure standards in effect are being enforced.
- Senate Bill 50, The Public Lands Protection Act, establishes a new state policy to discourage conveyances of federal lands to private developers for resource extraction and directs the State Lands Commission, which oversees much of the federal lands in the state, to establish a right of first refusal by the state of any federal lands proposed for sale or conveyance to other parties.
- Senate Bill 51, the Whistleblower and Public Data Protection Act, would ensure scientists and other professionals do not lose state licensure for revealing dangers to public health and safety. It also would direct state environmental and public health agencies to protect information under state law, even if parties in Washington D.C. order their censorship or destruction.

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About Inland Empire Waterkeeper

Established in 2005, Inland Empire Waterkeeper is a non-profit environmental organization whose mission is to protect waterways throughout Riverside and San Bernadino Counties through programs of advocacy, education, research, restoration and enforcement. www.iewaterkeeper.org

About Vet Voice Foundation

Founded in 2009, the Vet Voice Foundation mobilizes veterans to become leaders in our nation's democracy through participation in the civic process. www.vetvoicefoundation.org

About Hispanic Access Foundation

Hispanic Access Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that improves the lives of Hispanics in the United States and promotes civic engagement by educating, motivating and helping them access trustworthy support systems. We build bridges that connect Latino communities with the information and services they need for a better life. www.hispanicaccess.org