



COACHELLA VALLEY WATER DISTRICT

Established in 1918 as a public agency

GENERAL MANAGER

Jim Barrett

ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER

Robert Cheng

CLERK OF THE BOARD

Sylvia Bermudez

ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER

Dan Charlton

May 29, 2024

VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Alex Padilla
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Laphonza Butler
United States. Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Padilla and Butler:

RE: Senate Companion Bill Request – H.R. 7916, Removing Nitrate and Arsenic in Drinking Water Act

On behalf of the Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD), I write to respectfully request your introduction of a companion bill to H.R. 7916, the *Removing Nitrate and Arsenic in Drinking Water Act*, in the U.S. Senate. Introduced by Representative Norma Torres (D-CA-35) and Representative David Valadao (R-CA-22), this bipartisan legislation seeks to amend the *Safe Drinking Water Act* to address the reduction of nitrate and arsenic levels in drinking water. In particular, a grant program like this could make a profound impact in the East Coachella Valley (ECV), where many disadvantaged communities work to confront naturally-occurring arsenic in their groundwater.

Established in 1918, CVWD was formed with the core mission of safeguarding and preserving water resources, primarily for agricultural irrigation purposes. Over the years, CVWD has evolved into a multifaceted agency serving a vast area of approximately 1,000 square miles, stretching from the San Geronio Pass to the Salton Sea, predominantly within Riverside County but also including portions of Imperial and San Diego counties. Today, CVWD offers a wide array of water-related services, including delivering irrigation and drinking water, groundwater replenishment, storm water protection, wastewater treatment and recycling, and promoting water conservation.

As you may know, H.R. 7916 would establish a grant program to provide assistance for projects aimed at reducing nitrate or arsenic levels in public water systems. Eligible entities for this grant program would include community water systems, non-profit organizations with experience in nitrate or arsenic reduction, municipalities, states, interstate or intermunicipal agencies, and special-purpose units of local government, such as CVWD. The legislation would require the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator to prioritize grants for entities that have not been in compliance with maximum contaminant levels of nitrate or arsenic, particularly those serving disadvantaged communities like ECV or facilities primarily serving vulnerable populations such as children or seniors. The bill would authorize \$15 million for the grant program in Fiscal Year 2025, and each fiscal year thereafter. The bill would also mandate an annual review by the EPA Administrator to ensure equity and address the needs of economically disadvantaged and underserved populations.

The Honorable Alex Padilla
The Honorable Laphonza Butler
United States Senate
May 29, 2024
Page 2

This program would be a benefit to CVWD ratepayers particularly in the areas of Mecca, Oasis, and North Shore, where naturally occurring arsenic in the groundwater is at levels higher than current state and federal drinking water standards. Before any water is delivered to customers, it is treated to ensure high-quality drinking water that meets stringent federal and state drinking water quality standards.

Thank you for taking the time to consider the introduction of this important bipartisan legislation that would benefit thousands of Californians. We ask that you please work with your colleagues to ensure its swift passage through Congress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. M. Barrett", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

J. M. Barrett
General Manager