

Hicks-Ray Associates

Implementing Strategies, Achieving Success



May 18, 2016

TO: WESTCAS Membership

FROM: Hicks-Ray Associates

SUBJECT: Senate Hearing on Western Water Bills

Yesterday, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee/Subcommittee on Water and Power, held a hearing on five different Western water bills. Tim Quinn of ACWA was one of those who testified. The bills included:

S. 2533 (Feinstein/CA): California Long-Term Provisions for Water Supply and Short-Term Provisions for Emergency Drought Relief Act

S. 2902 (Flake/AZ; co-sponsored by Barrasso/WY; McCain/AZ; Risch/ID; Heller/NV; Daines/NV): The Western Water Supply and Planning Enhancement Act

S. 2524 (Gardiner/CO; co-sponsored by Bennett/CO): Bolts Ditch Access and Use Act

S. 2616 (Gardiner/CO; co-sponsored by Bennett/CO): A bill to modify certain cost-sharing and revenue provisions relating to Arkansas Valley Conduit, Colorado

S. 2907 (Reid/NV) To amend the Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2015 to strike the termination date for funding for pilot projects to increase Colorado River System water in Lake Mead, and for other purposes.

As you can see, some of the bills under consideration yesterday are focused on specific projects in the Arid West. Senator Feinstein's S. 2533 offers an expansive fix for drought problems in both California and throughout the Arid West.

Few would argue that drought and water supply are not huge issues in the Arid West. However, the greatest challenge faced by these five bills is the relatively small number of days remaining in the 114th Congress. It may appear ridiculous to say in mid-May that there isn't much time left in a Congress that will be in session until almost Christmas. But thanks to long adjournments for the Republican and Democratic conventions in July and then the general election in November, that is the reality.

Probably the best chance for these individual bills to move forward is to be folded into a much larger omnibus legislative vehicle that will move later this year, perhaps during the lame duck session of Congress that will begin after Thanksgiving. A total of 10 Senators are sponsoring/cosponsoring the 5 Western water bills. The hearing yesterday in Senate Energy and Natural Resources/Water and Power Subcommittee tees up all five bills to take the next step in the legislative process.

These bills, especially Senator Feinstein's S. 2533, will be a focus of discussion at the WESTCAS summer conference, June 22-24 in Santa Fe. We are looking forward to seeing you there.

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