

# Hicks-Ray Associates

*Implementing Strategies, Achieving Success*



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September 18, 2017

TO: WESTCAS Membership

FROM: Hicks-Ray Associates

SUBJECT: Support for A National Title XVI Competitive Grant Program

WESTCAS has joined with nearly 30 water agencies in California and Texas to advocate for a single Bureau of Reclamation Title XVI competitive grant program. This differs from the current two-track process where projects with Congressional construction authorizations compete in a separate category from those with only Bureau approved feasibility studies. A group of water agency representatives were in Washington last week to make this argument to the Congress.

The Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation [WIIN Act] of December 2016 included amendments that eliminated the need for Title XVI projects to be congressionally authorized. Now local sponsors may submit completed feasibility studies to the Bureau. The studies that receive Bureau approval are eligible to compete for available appropriated funds. Supporters who advocated for these amendments worked under the impression that their efforts would create a single national competitive grant program for all Title XVI funding and not a new program that was separate from the original effort.

But the Bureau is currently administering the Title XVI program based on the FY17 Omnibus Appropriations Act that separately allocates a portion of the overall Title XVI funding to, “projects as authorized in section 4009(c) of Public Law 114-322 (the WIIN Act).

The FY18 House-Passed and the Senate Appropriations Committee passed Energy and Water Appropriations bills include approximately \$35 million in funding for the Title XVI program. However, only \$10 million is reserved for the so-called “new projects.”

This means that \$25 million is reserved for Title XVI projects that have been authorized by the Congress under the pre-WIIN Title XVI program while \$10 million is allocated to projects that have secured the approval of the Bureau for feasibility studies under the “new” Title XVI program. This first group represents a static number of projects whereas the second group is part of an ever-expanding number that have had feasibility studies approved by the Bureau. For example, the Bureau recently approved 37 new feasibility studies in a single announcement earlier this summer.

Confused? We can appreciate why you might be. The bottom line expressed by the attached letter is that a single Title XVI grant program as opposed to the current two-track process better serves the needs of the Arid West.

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