

# WESTERN DROUGHT

October 2016

## THE SITUATION



The Western U.S. is experiencing an historic drought. **California is facing its worst drought in 1,200 years** and the Colorado River, which supplies water to millions of people across seven Western states and Mexico, is experiencing its sixteenth straight year of drought.

## HOW'D WE GET TO THIS POINT?

While the Western U.S. is prone to periodic drought, according to scientists, **the current drought has been made worse by climate change.**

## HOW ARE WEST COASTERS AFFECTED?

Many **communities and numerous industries have been harmed by the drought**, including the Pacific Coast fishing industry, agriculture, tourism and the recreation industry. The environment and iconic West Coast fish runs have also been battered during the drought, with several runs on the verge of extinction.

## WHY SHOULD ALL AMERICANS CARE?

**The current drought has cost the national economy billions.** Drought coupled with crumbling and insufficient water infrastructure has an effect on all Americans since it has raised and will continue to raise food costs. What's worse, **climate change is expected to make droughts more frequent and severe.** If steps aren't taken now to invest in new water infrastructure and technology to increase the nation's water supply, the United States will not be prepared to weather ongoing and future drought.

## THE FACTS

**<10%** of the **32 billion gallons of municipal wastewater produced** annually in the U.S. is recycled, according to the EPA.

Every year, **the U.S. loses enough water to supply millions of people simply because we aren't investing in new technologies** to better detect leaks and tap alternative water sources.

## WHAT'S CONGRESS DOING?

**Congress has not done nearly enough to provide drought relief or grow the water supply.**

Several **Democratic bills would provide immediate and long-term drought relief** by promoting innovative desalination technologies, water recycling and reuse, groundwater recharge, stormwater capture, reduced evaporation loss, and increased water conservation through improved reservoir operations. **Despite repeated requests, Republicans have not permitted a single hearing on any of these bills.**

**Republicans jammed through the House a divisive drought "response" bill (H.R. 2898) that would create no new water.** Instead, the bill would pick drought winners and losers by taking scarce water away from some regions, tribes, and the environment and redirecting it to big agricultural water users. The GOP drought bill would have also preempted state law, jeopardized fishing industry jobs and weakened bedrock environmental laws.

## HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD?

**Republicans have to be willing to work with Democrats to develop a plan that will fund our nation's deficient water infrastructure** and abandon plans to benefit Big Ag at the expense of the environment.