



Consisting of 240,000 acres on the Westside of the San Joaquin Valley

September 20, 2017

JAMES E. O'BANION
Chairman

CHRIS CARDELLA
Vice Chairman

STEVE CHEDESTER
Executive Director

ADAM HOFFMAN
Water Resources Specialist

JOANN WHITE
Administrative Assistant

**MINASIAN, MEITH,
SOARES, SEXTON
& COOPER LLP**
Legal Counsel

**CENTRAL CALIFORNIA
IRRIGATION DISTRICT**

James E. O'Banion
President

Christopher White
General Manager

**SAN LUIS CANAL
COMPANY**

James L. Nickel
President

Chase Hurley
General Manager

**FIREBAUGH CANAL
WATER DISTRICT**

Mike Stearns
President

Jeff Bryant
General Manager

**COLUMBIA CANAL
COMPANY**

Chris Cardella
President

Randy Houk
General Manager

P.O. Box 2115
541 H Street
Los Banos, CA 93635
(209) 827-8616
Fax (209) 827-9703
e-mail: jwhite@sjrecwa.net
Website: www.sjrecwa.net

The Honorable Jerry Brown
Governor
State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: ***Request for Signature on Assembly Bill 313 (Gray) – Water Rights
Fairness***

Dear Governor Brown:

The San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority (Exchange Contractors) represent over 240,000 acres of mainly small family farms on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley in Fresno, Madera, Merced and Stanislaus Counties. Our four member agencies hold senior water rights on the San Joaquin River.

On behalf of the Exchange Contractors, I write in support of AB 313, landmark water rights fairness legislation introduced by Assemblyman Adam Gray (D-Merced). This good governance bill will restore fundamental fairness currently lacking in California's water rights management. AB 313 passed the Legislature with strong bipartisan support and awaits your signature. We urge you to sign it into law without delay.

AB 313 ensures water rights holders, such as us, are afforded the same basic objectivity and due process our justice system promises *all* – nothing more, nothing less. The bill establishes a new water rights management structure, requiring that specially trained administrative law judges conduct water rights enforcement hearings. This intermediate transfer of power ensures a neutral body will efficiently adjudicate complex, often controversial, and critically important water rights matters.

Currently, the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) writes regulations, initiates enforcement actions, and conducts water rights hearings. As a result, many water rights holders feel coerced to settle administrative actions initiated by the SWRCB, rather than seek a resolution in the present process.

AB 313 establishes a Water Rights Division in the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) to handle all water rights enforcement matters. Specially

The Honorable Jerry Brown

RE: *Request for Signature on Assembly Bill 313 (Gray) – Water Rights Fairness*

September 20, 2017

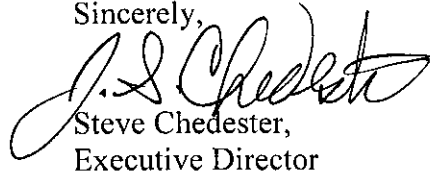
Page 2

trained administrative law judges will conduct hearings and submit a decision to the full SWRCB for adoption or amendment, a shift ensuring everyone is treated with the level of fairness our Constitution requires. The Senate Judiciary Committee recognized that the bill improves existing law while making no impact on environmental protections. AB 313 removes conflicts and inefficiencies, and guarantees hearings are run with requisite legal expertise.

The bill received overwhelming bipartisan support through the Assembly and Senate, a clear sign that the issue resonates across the state. The procedural structure it creates is similar to that recently adopted for the Board of Equalization. Nothing in AB 313 guarantees a better outcome for the water rights holder. It doesn't pick winners or losers, nor does it favor one constituency over the other. It simply allows for the constitutional protection of due process to be afforded to the state's water users.

I urge you to act immediately to sign AB 313 to make our water rights administration function more effectively, efficiently and fairly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Chedester", written in a cursive style.

Steve Chedester,
Executive Director