

Press Release

Congressman George Miller (D-California, 7th District)

Committee on Education and the Workforce, Committee on Resources

For Immediate Release / Danny Weiss - 202-225-2095

MILLER'S NEW WATER BILL WOULD BENEFIT PITTSBURG AND OTHER BAY AREA COMMUNITIES

Measure would provide federal partner for seven local water recycling projects

Friday, March 16, 2007

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman George Miller (D-Martinez) introduced new water legislation this week to help the City of Pittsburg and six other Bay Area communities increase their municipal water supplies through innovative water recycling projects.

Miller made a similar effort last year on behalf of Pittsburg and other Bay Area projects but this year has made significant changes to the legislation and expanded it to include additional regional programs. Miller said that now that Democrats control the Congress, as well as the Committee on Natural Resources that must consider this bill, he is encouraged that the bill stands a strong chance of being enacted.

“This bill would greatly help Pittsburg and other California communities better manage their scarce water resources,” said Miller, a recognized leader on California water issues. “Water recycling can and should play a greater role in California water resource management.”

“Pittsburg and other communities and local agencies have already expended a great deal of time and effort on developing water recycling projects to help them to meet some of their municipal water needs,” Miller said. “This bill would give them the extra support they need to successfully complete their projects.”

Water recycling offers great potential to states like California that suffer periodic droughts and have limited fresh water supplies. Miller’s bill, HR 1526, would establish a partnership between the federal government and local communities to implement a regional water recycling program in the Bay Area. In addition to Pittsburg, the bill would help Antioch, Palo Alto, Mountain View, Pacifica, South Santa Clara County, Redwood City, and San Jose.

Miller is the former Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, which has jurisdiction over water recycling, and is a longstanding proponent of water recycling as a means of drought-proofing California. The bill was co-sponsored by other Bay Area lawmakers, including Reps. Anna Eshoo (D-Atherton), Ellen Tauscher (D-Alamo), Jerry McNerney (D- Pleasanton), Tom Lantos (D- San Mateo), Mike Honda (D- San Jose), Zoe Lofgren (D- San Jose), and Pete Stark (D- Fremont).

“It only takes a small federal investment in the Bay Area Water Recycling Program to yield massive dividends to our region over time,” said Miller. “And this bill would authorize just that type of key investment. Every gallon of recycled water that goes towards irrigating a golf course or highway median – or for commercial or industrial use – is one gallon less of water taken from the Bay-Delta.

“We should encourage communities that are trying to meet water demands with innovative technologies,” Miller added. “These projects are the future of water supply, and they’re a fiscal and environmental win-win.”

Miller’s bill, the Bay Area Regional Water Recycling Program Authorization Act of 2007, authorizes the Department of the Interior to participate in the seven Bay Area Regional Water Recycling Program projects that are closest to completion. Each community with a project will be eligible to receive 25% of the project’s construction cost.

Miller’s new bill authorizes the following Bay Area water reuse projects:

- Antioch Recycled Water Project (Delta Diablo Sanitation District, City of Antioch)
- Pacifica Recycled Water Project (North Coast County Water District)

- Mountain View/ Moffett Area Water Reuse Project (City of Palo Alto, City of Mountain View)
- Pittsburg Recycled Water Project (Delta Diablo Sanitation District, City of Pittsburg)
- Redwood City Recycled Water Project
- South Santa Clara County Recycled Water Project (Santa Clara Valley Water District, South County Regional Wastewater Authority)
- South Bay Advanced Recycled Water Treatment Facility (Santa Clara Valley Water District, City of San Jose)

The seven projects are estimated to make 12,205 acre-feet of water available annually in the short term, and 37,600 acre-feet annually in the long term, all while reducing demand on the Delta and on existing water infrastructure. An acre-foot of water is the amount of water required to cover an acre to the depth of one foot.

To produce the same amount of water with a traditional dam and reservoir project would require need a dedicated facility that stored three to five times the volume, at significant expense and potential environmental impact.

In 1992, Miller helped to put the tools for federal-local water recycling partnerships in place with the Reclamation Projects Authorization and Adjustment Act of 1992, which not only included his historic Central Valley Project Improvement Act but featured a provision now known simply as the "Title XVI" water recycling program. The new bill also directs the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to fully fund the San Jose Area Water Reclamation and Reuse Project, first authorized in that original legislation.

The new bill has been referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources, chaired by Congressman Nick J. Rahall, II (D-WV). Miller wrote to Chairman Rahall requesting the bill's consideration. The text of that letter is below.

March 15, 2007

The Hon Nick J. Rahall, II
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rahall:

As you know, Western water is always one of the most contentious topics for our committee, and new water supply projects are often the focal point for disagreement and debate between policymakers. With that in mind, I want to assure you that the bill I have introduced today with my colleagues from the San Francisco Bay Area will reduce those controversies, rather than exacerbate them.

I am writing to request that the Committee on Natural Resources consider this new bill, H.R.1526, at the earliest opportunity. Our legislation enables local agencies across California's Bay-Delta region to invest in sustainable and reliable new water supplies – without the massive price tag or substantial environmental impact that usually accompanies new water projects.

The Bay Area Regional Water Recycling Program Authorization Act amends the Title XVI water reuse program to authorize federal participation in seven local water reuse and recycling projects that are ready to start delivering valuable water supply benefits to the region. These seven projects will make 12,205 acre-feet of water available annually in the short term, and 37,600 acre-feet annually in the long term, all while reducing demand on the Delta. To get the same dry-year supply from a traditional storage project would require a substantially larger facility, cost much more, and take far longer to come online.

I believe that this legislation deserves the support of the Committee on Natural Resources and the Congress, and I look forward to working with you to schedule its consideration.

Sincerely,

GEORGE MILLER
Member of Congress

CC: The Hon. Grace Napolitano, Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Water & Power