



Contact: Debbie Davis
Phone: (916)743-4406
Email: Debbie@ejcw.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EJ COALITION FOR WATER OFFICIALLY OPPOSES WATER BOND 2010 Wasteful Water Bond Leaves Communities Dry

Oakland, CA, February 17, 2010 – The Environmental Justice Coalition for Water officially announces its opposition to the Water Bond slated to appear on the November 2010 California Ballot. Despite its misleading title – “the Safe, Clean and Reliable Drinking Water Supply Act of 2010” – careful analysis reveals that less than 1% of the funds allocated are guaranteed to make it to the communities that need it the most. The State’s poorest communities reliant on toxic tap water are highly unlikely to see any benefit from this monstrous and wasteful bond.

“Politicians in Sacramento have billed this Bond as the solution to California’s water crises. But for the members of our coalition, this so-called solution provides little relief,” said Laurel Firestone, co-director of the Community Water Center, who is a member of the Environmental Justice Coalition for Water (EJCW). EJCW is a statewide coalition made up of over 70 community groups, nonprofits and Tribes working for just water policy in California.

Communities like Orleans, Monterey Tract Park, Tonyville, Granite Ridge, and Sunbird all struggling to find and fund a permanent supply of safe, affordable water for their basic human needs, are not likely to see a single penny of funding from the \$11.14 billion bond.

For families in these communities, the only impact they are likely to feel from this pork-filled bond are the cuts to other basic state budget-funded programs they rely on for survival. The cuts to the State budget will be necessary to fund the annual repayment on the bond. New cuts to accommodate the \$800 million annual debt-service will compound the cuts these communities have already seen in their social security checks, to their schools, to in home healthcare services, and the myriad other services that have been dramatically cut to cover existing massive shortfalls in the State’s budget.

The issue is not a lack of money, it is mismanagement of the money we already have. There are between 4 and 6 billion unspent bond dollars including bond dollars that can be used to get communities access to

safe, affordable water. Sadly those dollars were frozen, delaying communities access to safe, affordable water for a year or more, because our State budget is in a shambles.

According to Sandra Meraz, a longtime EJCW Member, “EJCW’s position is a departure from past water bond support. We supported both Propositions 50 and 84 and EJCW will likely support other water bonds in the future. We just can’t support a bond of this size, under these economic conditions, and with a net benefit for poor communities that is so far outweighed by the price our communities will pay.”

Leah Wills, an EJCW Board Member, added, “EJCW stands for Water Justice. We cannot in good faith support a bond that perpetuates injustice.”

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EJCW is a coalition of more than 70 community based and non-profit organizations working together to achieve water justice in California. Our members work to build capacity in low-income and communities of color so that together we can work to ensure that every community has access to safe, affordable water for basic human needs; water resources of sufficient quality to support subsistence fishing; access to water resources for tribal and other cultural uses; and access to water for recreation and to promote community health.