



"Serving Western Legislatures"

The Council of State Governments-WEST

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September 14, 2006

The Honorable Ted Stevens
Chairman
Committee on Commerce, Science and
Transportation
SD-508 DSOB
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jim DeMint
Chairman
Subcommittee on Disaster Prevention &
Prediction
SR-340 RSOB
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Daniel Inouye
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce,
Science and Transportation
SD-508 DSOB
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ben Nelson
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Disaster
Prevention & Prediction
SH-720 HSOB
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Stevens, Inouye, DeMint and Nelson:

The Western Legislative Conference of the Council of State Governments-*WEST*, (CSG-*WEST*), a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization of legislators from the thirteen western states urge the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation to enact S. 2751 "The National Integrated Drought Information System Act of 2006." In so doing, we are in complete and specific agreement with the Western Governors' Association (WGA) letter of September 5, 2006 that has been signed and sent to the Commerce Committee by Governor Rounds of South Dakota, Governor Richardson of New Mexico, and Governor Schweitzer of Montana.

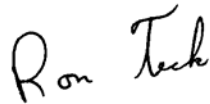
We concur with the governors that the nation and the West has a clear and critical need to move toward a drought monitoring and forecasting system that will fundamentally change the way policy makers and political leaders have responded to drought in the past. This is the vision of S. 2751 which authorizes the creation of an integrated drought information system that will do two things for America and the West's water professionals: It will give them knowledge and it will give them time in order to mitigate or even avoid the deep and persistent drought that have fastened on large areas of the West and the nation these past several years.

The cost of the current drought has been estimated by the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration as falling somewhere between six and eight billion

dollars a year. And since 2000, the federal government has spent over a billion dollars a year for wildfire suppression on our national forests and public lands. The integrated drought information system will allow us to move toward a proactive rather than a reactive response to the wildfires that have ravaged the land and polluted the air of western states.

On behalf of our colleagues on the CSG-*WEST* Executive Committee who have approved this policy in support of an integrated drought information system, we urge your support of this critical legislation and join with the WGA in an appeal for its passage.

Sincerely,



Senator Ron Teck, Colorado
Chair, CSG-*WEST*



Representative Jeff Morris, Washington
Chair-Elect, CSG-*WEST*



Representative Lesil McGuire, Alaska
Vice Chair, CSG-*WEST*



Senator Kate Brown, Oregon
Immediate Past Chair, CSG-*WEST*

CC: Governor Mike Rounds, South Dakota
Chair, Western Governors' Association

Pam Inmann, Executive Director
Western Governors' Association