

November 10, 2024

The Honorable Kim Schrier
1123 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Schrier:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write to express our strong support for H.R. 5664, the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act Amendments of 2023. We applaud your leadership in introducing this critical bipartisan legislation to improve and expand the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) program.

Our organizations collectively represent thousands of Western farmers, ranchers, water providers, businesses and communities who provide the food our nation relies upon through use of millions of acres of productive land, as well as many of the local and regional public water agencies that supply water to millions of Western urban, suburban and rural residents, and project delivery professionals designing and building the infrastructure.

As water districts, irrigation districts, counties, cities, water and infrastructure professionals deeply invested in the management and protection of water resources, we recognize the urgent need for investment in water infrastructure to address the challenges posed by aging systems, climate change, and increasing water scarcity. We particularly appreciate the following provisions of the bill:

1. Broadening WIFIA funding and financing eligibility to include state-led water storage projects and federally owned infrastructure managed by non-federal entities.
2. Allowing for longer loan maturity dates of up to 55 years, based on the expected life of the project, which will provide greater flexibility for large-scale, long-term projects.
3. Lowering the minimum project size for small communities from \$5 million to \$1 million, making the program more accessible to rural areas.
4. Expanding EPA's authority to provide technical and financial capacity support to small and rural communities.
5. Clarifying the definition of "small community" as those with a population of 25,000 or less, aligning with USDA's rural development program threshold. This important change will allow more communities to benefit from the program's provisions for small communities, such as the lower minimum project size and higher federal cost share.
6. Authorizing the use of collaborative project delivery methods, which will enhance efficiency and reduce costs.

These amendments will significantly enhance our ability to finance and implement critical water infrastructure projects in our region, ensuring a more reliable and sustainable water supply for our communities, agriculture, and ecosystems. We urge Congress to swiftly pass this legislation to provide much-needed support for water infrastructure improvements in our region and across the nation.

Thank you for your leadership on this crucial issue. If you have any questions about this letter, please do not hesitate to contact Dan Keppen, Family Farm Alliance, at (541)-892-6244 or dan@familyfarmalliance.org.

Sincerely,

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Larry B. McKenney, General Manager

American Public Works Association
Scott D. Grayson, CAE, Chief Executive Officer

Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA)
Ian Lyle, Director of Federal Relations

Central Valley Project Water Association (CALIFORNIA)
Brooke White, Executive Director

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Dolores Water Conservancy District (COLORADO)
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Eastern Municipal Water District (CALIFORNIA)
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Elephant Butte Irrigation District (NEW MEXICO)
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Wyoming Association of Irrigation Districts
Brian Duyck, President

cc: Rep. Dan Newhouse
Rep. John Garamendi
Rep. Doug LaMalfa
Rep. Jim Costa
Rep. Lori Chavez-DeRemer
Rep. Sharice Davids
Rep. Josh Harder
Rep. John S. Duarte
Rep. Suzan K. DelBene