

March 25, 2016

Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

Thank you for your proposed FY17 budget investments to help California respond to the historic drought and spur innovation solutions to balance the long-term needs of Californians. In the faith community we recognize that water is a fundamental component of all life, and that stewardship of water is part of our call to care for God's creation. Like California residents, Washington can't lose sight of the critical threats posed by drought to our environment and fish and wildlife, families and communities – and there is more to do.

Many California communities and ecosystems rely on groundwater, and despite the robust El Niño rains and resulting snowpack, California remains in a drought and the groundwater supplies have yet to recover. Sadly, some communities are unable to cope with the loss of wells and with limited infrastructure, they are left to face these dangerous impacts on their own. In addition to our call to be faithful stewards of the earth, faith traditions teach us to care for vulnerable populations including communities of color and low-income communities. It is therefore crucial that we protect these communities by continuing to invest in groundwater recharge and infrastructure to capture the El Niño storms, and enhanced data sharing and collection so that we have the best information available for local decision-making and balancing diverse water needs.

We believe that in your final State of the Union, you were very clear: climate change is a threat to us all. We have to focus relentlessly on workable solutions, especially solutions to help our most vulnerable communities and protect God's Earth. We are grateful that the White House has taken steps to combat drought, water shortages, and water insecurity in California and the West. It is our moral responsibility to care for our neighbors and for God's Creation, and your Administration's proposed FY17 budget is a step forward. Please do more to protect California's families and fragile environment.

As Deputy Secretary Mike Connor [has said](#), “Water is the lifeblood of our communities and every drop counts.”

Sincerely,

Church of the Brethren, Office of Public Witness
Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life
Creation Justice Ministries
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Green Chalice Ministry
The Episcopal Church
Evangelical Environmental Network
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Advocacy Office
Presbyterian Church USA
Sisters of Mercy, West Midwest Justice Team
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas’ Institute Justice Team
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

CC: Honorable Sally Jewell, Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior
Honorable Dianne Feinstein, U.S. Senator
Honorable Barbara Boxer, U.S. Senator
Shaun Donovan, Director, White House Office of Management and Budget
Estevan López, Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation
Christina Goldfuss, Managing Director, White House Council on Environmental Quality
Wade Crowfoot, Deputy Cabinet Secretary, State of California