May 2, 2016

The Honorable Jim Inhofe
Chairman

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member Boxer:

The California Association of Sanitation Agencies (CASA) writes in strong support of the Water Resources Development Act of 2016 (S. 2848). For 60 years, CASA has been the leading voice for public wastewater agencies on regulatory, legislative and legal issues, representing 90% of the state. We are an association of local agencies, engaged in advancing the recycling of wastewater into usable water, generation of renewable energy, and other valuable resources. Through these efforts we help create a clean and sustainable environment for Californians.

This bill represents a watershed initiative with its provisions to address the deteriorating condition of our water infrastructure and focus on the development of sustainable water supply solutions. We urge swift action by the Senate on this bill. Of specific note are several provisions in the bill that, if enacted, would lead to an improved quality of life for our communities. We believe the bill’s support for innovative water supply technologies, enhanced funding of water quality needs, and use of best science to manage our water resources is vital to ensuring we can respond to the changing nature of water quality and supply conditions.

In addition, the priority given in the bill to reinvigorating our core water infrastructure programs, including the State Revolving Fund (SRF) program, is critical to our ability to deliver safe and reliable water supplies for use by municipal, industrial and environmental interests. We support S. 2848’s attention to this policy objective.

Many of our member agencies provide both water quality and water supply services. One provision that we believe would assist our efforts to address the impacts of drought in the arid west is the leveraging of federal and nonfederal investments as set out in Section 1012. This provision would allow for nonfederal entities to request the review and approval of the use of reservoirs to capture stormwater flows. Utilization of this excess capacity could, in turn, help provide for a sustainable water supply. This commonsense approach could generate tens of thousands of acre-feet of water annually. The committee is to be commended for the development of this provision that would safeguard existing water rights, ensure that nonfederal entities would have to make a request and pay for any study examining the value and appropriateness of implementing this measure, and avoid decisions that would adversely impact other stakeholders’ water needs. It is this kind of revenue neutral policymaking that can lead the way to innovative and effective solutions to address both flood protection and water scarcity.

We look forward to swift Senate floor debate and a vote to ensure that S. 2848 can proceed to conference with the House of Representatives and ensure enactment in this session.

Roberta L. Larson
Executive Director