



Senator Melissa Hurtado

REPRESENTING SENATE DISTRICT 14

Senate Bill 513

The Water Well Assistance Act of 2019

As Amended May 17, 2019

SUMMARY

SB 513 will provide relief for families without reliable access to water by providing a temporary alternative source of water supply.

BACKGROUND

Community based organizations (CBOs) like Self-Help Enterprises offer financial assistance using state and federal funding to provide relief to families in the Central Valley by installing water tanks as a temporary solution for the duration of California's historic drought.

During the drought, the installation of these tanks received funding from the California Disaster Assistance Act. The Act designated the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) to administer the program and provide critical funding. After the end of the drought declaration, Self-Help Enterprises has relied on funds specifically allocated through the state budgeting process, and provided by Cal OES.

At the height of California's historic drought, about 1,200 water tanks were installed by Self-Help Enterprises through partnerships with county Offices of Emergency Services and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs). While NGOs such as Self-Help Enterprises have provided relief to a large swath of Central Valley families, hundreds of families continue to suffer from the aftermath of the drought.

THE PROBLEM

Although the drought was declared over, water shortage is a chronic symptom in the Central Valley. Groundwater moves much more slowly than surface water, and it takes time for groundwater recharge to occur.

Until March 2019, OES contracts only allowed for the *continued filling of existing* tanks for existing clients,

and the program was not being expanded to serve families whose wells went dry after April 2017. OES has since made assurances to the Legislature that funding is also available for homes that have gone dry outside of a drought declaration, including new tanks.

However, while OES has since committed to disbursing funds to additional families, there is lack of clarity in the law regarding what will happen to the program once the initial funding runs out.

Without clarity in the law that allows this program to allocate funds to homes outside of emergency situations, CBOs will remain unable to offer families the comfort of interim water tanks, while the state works toward a permanent solution.

SOLUTION

This bill authorizes the State Water Resources Control Board to administer grant funds and assume provision of interim relief measures, such as water tanks and hauled water, in the absence of an emergency proclamation. SB 513 also conforms to budget allocations in AB 74 (ENROLLED JUNE 13, 2019).

SUPPORT

Self-Help Enterprises (sponsor)
County of Tulare
Kings River Drilling
Armona Community Services District
Bubba's Water Truck Service, Inc.
California Coalition For Rural Housing
Madera County Water & Natural Resources
Mariposa County Health & Human Services Agency

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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