

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0508

June 13, 2018

Honorable Mayor Eric Garcetti
City of Los Angeles
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Mayor Garcetti:

In 1945, the California Legislature enacted the Charles Brown Act to regulate how the City of Los Angeles manages its real property in Inyo County. According to the Act, the City's ownership of land in Inyo created a relationship between Los Angeles and the people of Inyo County so detrimental to the interests of Inyo County that it required the exercise of police power by the State. Specifically, intervention was needed to protect Inyo from arbitrary acts by the City with respect to its leased properties – including charging excessive rents and advertising leases for competitive bid following significant investment in those lands by current lessee(s). To this day, the State exercises its police power through the Act to ensure the fair treatment of Inyo County and its residents by the City.

It appears to me that similar legislation, whether at the State or federal level, may be needed to address recent events in Mono County. In particular, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power's (LADWP) sudden proposal to de-water over 6,000 acres of active and productive ranchland, which has been grazed for more than 100 years, has called the status quo into question. Left unchecked, this action threatens to dry up thousands of acres of land in Mono County; destroy wildlife habitat and scenic vistas; increase the risk of catastrophic wildfire; cause uncontrolled and dangerous increases in dust levels; and undermine the economy of the region. Agriculture is the second largest industry in Mono, following tourism, and the lands in question support hundreds of jobs and contribute millions to the local economy.

I understand you have directed LADWP to provide .71 acre-feet (AF) of water per acre to these lands this season (compared to the historic 5 AF per acre) and to conduct an environmental review of the LADWP proposal to completely dewater the land in the future. Unfortunately, .71 AF is grossly insufficient to preserve the habitat and wildlife living on the ranchland created over the last 70 years, nor will it prevent significant economic impacts and job loss in Mono County. Furthermore, the performance of environmental review will not make de-watering these lands in the future acceptable.

I ask that you direct that historic amounts of water (5 AF per acre) be immediately authorized for leased lands in Mono County in order to avoid catastrophic impacts this summer. Only by preserving this status quo will LADWP and Mono County have the room to work together to address this situation and may forestall a legislative solution. Mono County needs

certainty over time that it will receive sufficient water to survive and that Los Angeles will treat its residents fairly. I remain hopeful that this can be done through compromise and by working together, without resorting to legislation.

Thank you for taking the time to read and respond to this request. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or my Legislative Director, Tim Itnyre, at 202-225-5861. I look forward to working with you and your office on this matter.

Sincerely,



Col. Paul Cook (Ret.)
Congressman, 8th District of California

cc:

Mel Levine, President, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power Board of Commissioners

David Wright, General Manager, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power Mono County Board of Supervisors

Stacey Simon, Mono County Counsel