



SIERRA CLUB
CALIFORNIA

February 18, 2010

For Immediate Release

Contact: Jim Metropulos (916) 557-1100 x 109

Poll Shows Voters Ready to Flush \$11 Billion Water Bond in November

SACRAMENTO, Feb. 18 – A majority of California voters oppose the \$11.1 billion water bond that the Legislature and the Governor have placed on the November ballot, according to a recent statewide poll conducted by Tulchin Research.

Just one-third of likely voters (34%) support the water bond currently, while more than a majority of likely voters (55%) oppose it. That's a very weak start for a bond measure, and some of the existing support is likely to drop off as a campaign against the bond ramps up later this year, in the view of opponents of the bond, who released the survey results today. (Please see the attached memo from Tulchin Research for more.)

"Voters recognize this bond as bad water policy and bad fiscal policy at a time when California is drowning in red ink," said Jim Metropulos, Senior Advocate with Sierra Club California, part of the campaign opposing the bond measure. "We need clean water and we need a better water policy, but this bond is not going to get us there."

Pollster Ben Tulchin, who conducted the survey, called the results daunting.

"The challenge for backers of this bond is monumental," said Tulchin. "No statewide bond measure has ever won when a majority of voters opposed it at the outset."

Support was weak in the poll, even among those voting yes, with just 12% saying they would "definitely" vote yes and 4% saying they merely "leaned" in favor. In contrast, there was greater intensity on the "no" side, with a third of all voters polled (32%) saying they would "definitely" vote no.

"This bond hands out billions of dollars to corporations and other special interests at the expense of California taxpayers," said Adam Scow, California Campaigns Director with consumer rights group Food & Water Watch. "It's no surprise that support for the bond is already weak. We expect voters to reject it in November."

A number of prominent environmental, consumer, and environmental justice organizations have already joined the campaign opposing the bond, including the Sierra Club, Clean Water Action, Planning and Conservation League, Friends of the River, Food & Water Watch, the Environmental Justice Coalition for Water, the Winnemem Wintu tribe, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance, California Water Impact Network (C-WIN), Southern California Watershed Alliance, and Restore the Delta.

"We are encouraged to see that voters across California share our view that this bond is a bad deal for



taxpayers,” said Tina Andolina, Legislative Director for the Planning and Conservation League.

Andolina noted that cross-tabulated results from the poll show opposition across party and geographic lines. “No demographic group anywhere in the state offers majority support for the bond,” said Andolina. “Voters of all parties oppose it, as do voters in the northern and southern parts of the state and the Central Valley.”

Opponents note that the bond does not provide immediate funding to municipalities or conservation efforts. Low-income communities, many of which live with contaminated drinking water, would receive only a tiny fraction of total bond funds.

In contrast, up to \$4 billion of taxpayers’ investment could be used to subsidize large corporate interests, including agribusinesses, that will profit from the projects. \$3 billion can be used to construct new dams, and as much as \$1 billion can subsidize costly private desalination projects.

Campaign members point out that money to finance the bond will come out of California’s general fund, which also funds education, healthcare, police and fire, and other essential services. The hit on the general fund would be enormous, as much as \$800 million per year. Total debt repayment on the bond is expected to top \$22 billion over 30 years.

“Instead of building projects we don’t need, we should be fixing local drinking water systems and taking other steps to ensure a safe, reliable water supply for California,” said Scow of Food & Water Watch. “Voters are already signaling that they know this bond is the wrong approach at the wrong time.”

###