

October 5, 2017

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
Governor of California
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 252 (Dodd)—Request Signature

Dear Governor Brown:

The League of Women Voters of California requests your signature on SB 252 (Dodd). This bill represents a reasonable compromise for beginning to manage permitting of new wells in the state's critically overdrafted groundwater basins, where thousands of families reliant on shallow domestic wells have been losing access to water.

Based on our long-time support for standards for groundwater management tailored to the carrying capacity of each basin, the League is following with great interest developments related to SGMA. Groundwater overdrafting continues largely unabated while critically overdrafted basins form Groundwater Sustainability Agencies and develop Groundwater Sustainability Plans, the earliest of which are not due until 2020. We are concerned about the impact on vulnerable domestic wells as neighboring agricultural water users rush to drill new wells, including wells in land that has not formerly been irrigated, in advance of likely new drilling constraints.

Unlike last session's SB 1317, which the League did not support, SB 252 gives local government a tool, not to limit new wells but to make information about well permitting requests available to all those who may be affected. This is a modest step toward engaging all stakeholders in decisions about how groundwater is managed. It gives local entities the final authority for protecting the interests of local residents and allows them to do so in the context of developing their sustainability plans, even exempting a county from the bill's requirements if and when it adopts its own comparably strict well ordinances.

We recognize the importance of giving nascent GSAs discretion regarding well permitting. This bill would not remove that discretion. We recognize the sensitivity of issues of privacy and property rights associated with extraction of groundwater. However, some degree of transparency will ultimately be necessary to manage California's groundwater resources efficiently and equitably. We urge you to sign SB 252.

Sincerely,



Helen L. Hutchison
President
cc: Senator Bill Dodd