|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **For Immediate Release:** | **Contact:** [Neal A. Patel](mailto:neal_patel@heller.senate.gov) | | July 13, 2016 | 202-224-6244 |   **Heller, Other Western Senators Applaud**  **Committee Passage of Drought Bill** *Legislation would address water rights, infrastructure, and*  *conservation in drought-stricken states*  **(Washington, DC)** – Today, U.S. Senators Dean Heller (R-Nev.), Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.), John Barrasso (R-Wyo.), John McCain (R-Ariz.), James Risch (R-Idaho), and Steve Daines (R-Mont.) applauded the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee’s passage of the Western Water Supply and Planning Enhancement Act (S. 2902), their [jointly-introduced bill](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2016/5/heller-other-western-senators-introduce-legislation-to-advance-water-priorities-for-drought-stricken-states) to combat the Western drought. The legislation provides forward-looking measures to help drought-stricken states make better use of existing water infrastructure, increase conservation efforts, and protect state-issued water rights.    “Unfortunately, Nevada is no stranger to drought. The importance of Nevada’s water supply cannot be understated. It serves as the catalyst for our communities to grow and flourish. I’m proud to stand in unison with my western colleagues here on Capitol Hill to ensure every drop of western water is stretched as far as it can go,” **said Senator Heller.**  “After today, the most impressive thing I’ve ever seen moved by water isn’t a barge or an aircraft carrier; it’s the United States Senate,” **said Senator Flake.** “With the committee’s approval of this forward thinking proposal, Congress is finally poised to confront the drought and ensure reliable access to water in the West. This bill ought to be brought to the floor and passed without delay.”    “Today’s vote brings us one step closer to further developing and enhancing our water resources—which is critical to economic development, job creation and our environment,” **said Senator Barrasso.** “Developing and maintaining a clean and abundant water supply is not just an issue for other parts of the country. It's the lifeblood of our western communities.”    “I thank the members of the committee for approving this legislation, which is essential to combating catastrophic wildfire and historic drought – two top issues for Arizona’s future,” **said Senator McCain.** “I look forward to working with my colleagues to push this bill forward so we can strengthen forest management, safeguard our water supplies, and ensure Arizona’s lands are enjoyed by generations to come.”    “If I told you that today, over 22,000 Montanans lack access to a steady supply of water, you’d be shocked. That’s why it was important to me to include measures that will improve the efficiency of existing water supply infrastructures and protect water rights in this bill,” **said Senator Daines.**  Specific provisions in the bill would:           Direct the re-evaluation of flood control operations to western storage reservoirs (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, or non-federal) in order to use up-to-date forecasting methods and hydrology to enhance water storage.           Direct a study by the National Academy of Sciences and an implementation plan by the Department of Interior (DOI) on how to best control water-intensive invasive species like tamarisk, also known as salt cedar.          Encourage voluntary efforts to conserve water in order to protect Lake Mead from falling into shortage by building on a successful pilot program.           Apply a streamlined permitting process for forest and wildland restoration efforts to help protect watersheds in critical water supply areas.           Ensure that DOI and the Department of Agriculture respect state-issued water rights and abide by state groundwater laws when managing groundwater under federal lands. This language was originally introduced as [S. 982](https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/982#_blank) by Heller, Barrasso, Flake, McCain, and Risch.    ###  [cid:image005.png@01D15EA3.CEBDCB00](http://www.facebook.com/pages/US-Senator-Dean-Heller/325751330177)[cid:image006.png@01D15EA3.CEBDCB00](http://twitter.com/SenDeanHeller)[cid:image007.png@01D15EA3.CEBDCB00](http://www.youtube.com/user/SenDeanHeller) |