



March 15, 2022

Honorable Richard Bloom  
California State Assembly  
1021 O Street, Suite 8130  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 2313 (Bloom) – SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblymember Bloom:

On behalf of the State Water Contractors (SWC), I am pleased to inform you that we support your AB 2313, which would encourage the Judicial Council to establish a training and education program for judges related to complex water matters, and require the Judicial Council to identify a set of independent and nonpartisan specialized staff employed by the judicial branch with expertise in water science, management, or law, who will be available to any judge adjudicating a water dispute. Your AB 2313 would also authorize a judge to appoint a qualified special master to assist the judge with an action relating to water, with duties similar to those for special masters in comprehensive groundwater adjudications.

The SWC is an organization representing 27 of the 29 public water entities that hold contracts with the California Department of Water Resources for the delivery of State Water Project water. Collectively, the SWC members provide a portion of the water supply delivered to approximately 27 million Californians, roughly two-thirds of the state's population, and to more than 750,000 acres of irrigated agriculture. Water supply delivered to the Bay Area, San Joaquin Valley, Central Coast, and Southern California from the State Water Project is diverted from the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta.

After more than 170 years of statehood, California's water rights system is well established, but that doesn't mean that questions don't remain about water rights validity or seniority, which are exceedingly complex and conflict-laden adjudicative processes. Similarly, issues related to water appropriations, riparian rights, diversions, reasonable and beneficial uses, and the Public Trust Doctrine all make California's legal construct relative to water issues very complex and challenging to navigate and understand.

Your AB 2313 would take important steps forward in moving California's legal and judicial system toward a more accessible and manageable judicial process for resolving and adjudicating water-related disputes. Too often,

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complex water matters get bogged-down in the judicial process due to the relative scarcity of judges and judicial officials with advanced knowledge, experience, and understanding of California water law and issues.

As experienced many times over the course of California's water history, so many key water conflicts end up in court, so it is extremely important that the judges who render decisions about this life-sustaining resource have an added background in water. Specialty judges are not a new concept. There are judges at the state and federal level who only oversee cases involving bankruptcy, family law, probate, or juvenile matters. The complexity of California water law and the conflicts embodied within that set of statutes and cases supports the approach you are advancing through AB 2313 to improve the judicial process and better position the courts to handle complex water issues.

Please don't hesitate to contact me at [jpierre@swc.org](mailto:jpierre@swc.org) or at (707) 280-9673, or SWC's legislative advocate Glenn Farrel at [glenn@gfadfocacy.com](mailto:glenn@gfadfocacy.com) or (916) 216-1747, if you have any questions regarding the SWC's position on AB 2313.

Sincerely,



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