



CITIZENS FOR CALIFORNIA HIGH SPEED RAIL ACCOUNTABILITY

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **"Voters Get Opportunity to Set California Priorities Straight - Water In, Train Out"**

**(Hanford, California, Thursday, November 12, 2015)** - The voters of California now have an opportunity to determine where the priorities of California need to be in the near future. Board of Equalization Vice Chair, George Runner and Senator Bob Huff have submitted a voter initiative to the Attorney General that could be placed on the 2016 Election. This initiative will give voters a choice to take unused bonding capacity from the California High Speed Rail Project (HSR Project) authorized under Proposition 1A and put it towards water infrastructure projects that are vitally need to meet the current water needs of the State and to prevent social and economic impacts when the next drought strikes California.

This initiative comes at a critical point in the HSR Project as the California High Speed Rail Authority (Authority) has made very little progress on the project and numerous questions of legitimacy surround the Authority and the HSR Project. To fund water projects in California, the initiative seeks to redirect unused HSR funds from the project that were authorized by the voters in 2008 under Proposition 1A. The Authority has spent eight years trying to develop a project that meets Proposition 1A's requirements, and both the courts and the public have highlighted numerous shortcomings that have kept the Authority and the State from issuing Proposition 1A bonds.

More recently, the Authority came under fire for withholding key documents that showed that the 2014 Business Plan that was presented to the California Legislature was based on artificially low values, and the project will likely exceed the budget set forth in 2014. The Authority also received proposals from 36 international companies that specialize in high-speed rail projects, most of which told the Authority that private funding was not coming to the rescue and that the approach planned by the HSR Authority is not technically or financially feasible.

The Democratic Party-controlled California Legislature, charged with the responsibility to oversee the HSR Project, has refused to appropriately address concerns and has opted instead to loosen oversight of the project. Recently, Assembly Speaker Tony Atkins responded to a request to investigate the Authority for withholding documents by brushing off the severity of the incident and emphasizing "broader range of oversight in 2016." Earlier in the year the legislature passed Assembly Bill 95, which eliminated the requirement for the Authority to produce and submit key progress reports and reduced the frequency that the Authority produced and submitted project and financial reports.

A large majority of voters of California are tired of watching communities, farms and businesses struggle with the lack of water while a rogue agency like the California High Speed Rail Authority and the Legislature mismanages their multi-billion dollar project. We hope that in 2016 voters will send a message to the Governor and the California Legislature that we can and will set water as our priority in the State of California and hold our public agencies accountable for the use of our limited tax dollars.

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