

October 24, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

It is difficult to overstate the deep and intractable economic difficulties in California's Central Valley. A region already in difficulty before the financial crisis due to long-standing water issues was devastated by the collapse in the housing market and more than three years later, many of our constituents have lost hope for their future and faith in their government. Unemployment rates remain double the national average in many communities and foreclosure rates continue to be among the highest in the nation.

The Central Valley is the most productive farmland in the United States; in fact, the top five counties in the country for agricultural production are all located in the Valley. However, this industry, upon which so much of our local economy depends, was already in crisis before the financial collapse. This was both the result of natural drought and judicial and regulatory overreach that arbitrarily reduced water allocations putting thousands of people out of work. This year, despite being one of the wettest on record in California, inadequate allocations and continued obstruction of needed infrastructure improvements have meant that the water crisis has continued to hobble this important job creating and export intensive industry.

The lack of an effective solution to the water crisis is mirrored in the continued inability to provide relief to homeowners struggling with negative equity on their homes. There has been little indication that we have turned a corner in the Central Valley. Modesto and Stockton, two cities in our districts, rank no. 3 and no. 4 respectively on the list of metropolitan areas with the highest foreclosure rate. In Washington D.C., a city that has experienced no crisis, statistics like these are academic and do not convey the true distress experienced by so many families. That is why we would like to take the opportunity one more time, to invite you to see the situation firsthand, to hear the stories and to work with us to find a bipartisan path to recovery.

Sincerely,

Jeff Denham
United States Representative

Dennis Cardoza
United States Representative