



## Press Release

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# Senator Monning Introduces Bill To Provide Proactive Solutions To Small Water Systems At Risk Of Failing To Provide Safe Drinking Water

Sacramento, CA -- Today, Senator Bill Monning introduced SB 1280, which would grant the state an important new tool in the effort to ensure that every Californian has access to a sustainable and reliable source of safe drinking water.

The smallest water systems in the state are disproportionately prone to drinking water violations — ninety percent of all violations occur in systems with fewer than 500 connections. These very small water systems are also typically more vulnerable to groundwater overdraft, drought, climate change and wildfire. The State Water Resources Control Board has the authority to order consolidation of water systems that fail to provide safe drinking water, but does not currently have authority to act proactively to avoid drinking water emergencies in the first place.

Because larger consolidated water systems are generally more reliable and safer, SB 1280 would grant the State Water Board the authority to mandate consolidation of very small water systems at risk of failing to provide safe drinking water. To ensure that vulnerable communities have a say in how their water systems are governed, as well as the opportunity to cure problems, this new authority would be available only where those served by the small water system have petitioned the State Water Board for consolidation.

“SB 1280 is a preventive tool that will empower residents in disadvantaged communities to ask state water officials to intervene before their water system fails to provide safe drinking water,” said Senator Bill Monning. “The status quo forces communities to wait until their water system fails, and that is simply unacceptable.”

“I hope this bill helps communities that have been waiting for long-term solutions,” said Tooleville resident Benjamin Cuevas. “Tooleville has been trying for 20 years and I think it’s about time something gets done.”

“Many communities in the state are served by water systems that are on the brink of failure,” said Michael Claiborne with Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability. “People should not have to wait for a drinking water emergency before the state can step in with solutions.”

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*Leadership Counsel works alongside the most impacted communities to advocate for sound policy and eradicate injustice to secure equal access to opportunity regardless of wealth, race, income and place. We work with community leaders throughout the San Joaquin Valley and Eastern Coachella Valley on such issues as safe affordable drinking water, basic transit services, wastewater services, decent affordable housing, and the right to live free from industrial pollution with infrastructure that supports healthy lifestyles. Through copowerment, organizing, litigation, policy advocacy, and research, we confront California's stark inequalities manifest in too many of California's low income communities and communities of color.*