



March 3, 2025

Dear Governor Newsom, President pro Tem McGuire, & Speaker Rivas,

We, on behalf of the eight counties in California's Central Valley, write to respectfully request your prioritization of investments in our region for the upcoming fiscal year and years to come. The California Department of Finance has projected that the Central Valley will see the largest growth in the state over the next several decades. This is a critical moment to ensure adequate investment in the future while bearing in mind the outcomes of past decision-making.

As the elected Supervisors for this region, we individually and collectively want the best for the San Joaquin Valley and its residents. We are seeking your support and partnership to ensure prosperity for our shared constituents. Our priorities are as follows:

- Expedite Proposition 4 expenditures, specifically for water infrastructure, wildfire and extreme heat mitigation, flood control, and sustainable agriculture
- Address the dire energy and utilities affordability crisis
- Expand reliable access to broadband
- Fund further community-supported air quality improvements in the San Joaquin Valley
- Expedite the widening of State Route 99 from Bakersfield to Sacramento
- Ensure equitable reinvestment in the San Joaquin Valley under Cap & Trade reauthorization
- Permitting for oil and gas are best left to local authorities

Proposition 4 Expenditures

With the passage of Proposition 4 by the voters in the 2024 General Election, the state has a significant amount of money to better address the increasing prevalence of natural disasters in the state.

While we appreciate the inclusion of dollars from Proposition 4 in the January 10 Proposed Budget for extreme heat mitigation, sustainable agriculture, clean drinking water, and flood protection, we urge you to ensure these dollars find their way to the San Joaquin Valley and its vulnerable communities. Further, the \$173.4 million for improved water storage and groundwater replenishment is welcomed,

but we feel this investment is worthy of considerable increase, even up to the full \$386.25 million authorized for groundwater storage, banking, and recharge. We would also support an even greater authorization of the various water-related funding from Proposition 4. The impact of decreasing water supply has been remarkably detrimental to the Valley, its farmers, and the local economy overall. The funds approved by California's voters for water-related purposes should be put to good use as quickly as possible.

We of course understand the severity of recent wildfires in Southern California, and understand the need to provide immediate assistance there. We are grateful that money in the bond was preserved to help communities around the state. In the Central Valley, we know all too well the harm caused by catastrophic natural disasters. Many of our counties and communities have also recently experienced devastating fires, and we ask that money to help prevent more of these in the future be allocated throughout the state, especially for areas around the large swaths of state and federal land in the Sierra Nevada Mountains and foothills.

Energy Affordability

One of the most pressing issues facing San Joaquin Valley residents are utility costs. Keeping homes cool and the lights on in the summer is increasingly unaffordable locally.

Investor owned utilities continue to turn a profit in this state, and while we acknowledge and appreciate the vital services they provide to our constituents, the cost they pass on for things like undergrounding powerlines is unsustainable and inconsistent to the profits being made. We are looking to you to ensure investor owned utilities are focused first on their customers.

Further, many of our residents commute long distances. We understand the State's desire to move to lower emission vehicles, but our residents are considerably limited in their options considering electric vehicles currently on the market. While this market develops, the need for continued affordability at the pump cannot be underscored enough. Expediting the review of Ethanol 15 blends is good, but more must be done. Additionally, if our residents are going to be expected to pay the gas tax for road infrastructure improvements, electric vehicle owners should too.

Finally, we find it important to address California moving to a clean energy future. To be clear, we do not stand in opposition to grid diversification, especially if it lowers cost in the long run. In fact, the Central Valley has clearly proven its vital role in the State achieving its lofty decarbonization goals. We do, however, remain deeply concerned about the policy ramifications that our constituents feel more than most in the state. California must provide sufficient investment back into our region as land is fallowed for more large-scale solar and other alternative energy industries. Planning for these industries must be left to local discretion; local communities impacted by these planning decision must be at the table.

Reliable Access to Broadband

Access to reliable and affordable broadband is essential for full participation in today's economy, including access to education, healthcare, public safety and essential government services.

Our counties share the same policy goals as the State of California: connecting underserved areas to affordable high-speed broadband. The San Joaquin Valley, the world's most productive agricultural region, requires broadband to thrive. Broadband connectivity is vital for the region's residents, farms, and businesses to participate fully in the modern economy and not fall behind other California communities.

Our local leaders are committed to bridging the digital divide and will seek emerging opportunities to secure broadband infrastructure and digital inclusion funding for the San Joaquin Valley. However, we remain concerned about the distribution of broadband funding in California. The CPUC has approved more than \$1 billion in funding to help communities connect to broadband through the Federal Funding Account (FFA) program. However, the San Joaquin Valley Region has not been a top priority for FFA funding. As of January 17, 2025, only \$131 million of the more than \$1 billion (11.8%) has been allocated in this critical agricultural region.

As California continues its broadband deployment with state and federal funding, we will continue to collaborate with the CPUC, state leaders, local governments and community leaders to ensure the specific needs of the San Joaquin Valley are met.

This also means existing carriers should be held to their obligation to provide service to *all* of our residents, especially those in rural areas. We acknowledge the development of new technology, but until that technology is available at an affordable price to all of our residents, we cannot go backwards in bringing connectivity to those who need it most. We ask that you oppose any such efforts, whether proposed legislatively or through petition at the Administrative level, by industry.

Support for Valley Air Quality

The San Joaquin Valley faces some of the most significant air pollution challenges in the country – a problem we take very seriously. Not only will continued support to improve air quality in the Valley have considerable positive impacts on public health, but it is also an important component of the state meeting its emissions reduction goals. For that reason, we respectfully request additional funding consistent with asks made by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

First, we ask for financial support in the transition away from open burning in the Valley. As you may know, in partnership with CARB, the Valley developed a plan to phase-out open burning. This phase-out finished at the end of 2024, and Valley growers can no longer open burn. Unfortunately, this phase out has created a significant economic disadvantage for growers in the San Joaquin Valley compared to those in other areas of the state that – albeit with strict requirements – continue to have the ability to open burn. During this transition, the State provided \$180 million in 2021, all of which was expended in roughly three years. As our growers seek to comply with this phase-out in good faith, we ask that the State provide an annual allotment of \$75 million to support compliance with open burning alternatives as this will both keep small farms in business while still achieving the pollution reduction efforts sought through this phase-out.

Next, we ask that funding for both the FARMER and AB 617 Community Air Protection program be restored to full funding. The FARMER program provides support in turning over high carbon-emitting

agricultural equipment while the Community Air Protection program supports pollution reduction with a community-based approach. Both of these programs align with the State's broader climate reduction goals while also providing a direct benefit to the residents of the Valley. As such, we respectfully request an inclusion in this year's budget of \$200 million for the FARMER program along with \$300 million in incentive funding per year and restoring implementation funding to \$60 million per year for Community Air Protection program funding.

Completion of State Route 99

Important to the economic vitality of the San Joaquin Valley and the State is SR 99, which runs through all eight of our counties. As stated above, the Central Valley is burdened with considerable air quality challenges. Because of the significant amount of travel that takes place on the Interstate 5 freeway, which also runs through all eight of our counties, decreasing congestion on SR 99 is critically important to further air pollution locally. As such, we ask that you prioritize continued funding to complete the six-lane widening from Bakersfield to Sacramento.

Cap & Trade

Despite not expiring until 2030, we believe the reauthorization of Cap & Trade is likely to be a focal point of discussion within the Legislature this year. Should that be the case, we ask that important reinvestments into the Valley remain intact. While there will no doubt be extensive consideration of the allocations made through the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, we believe it is important to underscore the size of the contributions made through operators based in the San Joaquin Valley. It is critical that dollars be reinvested into our communities in an equitable way towards sources prioritized by our community.

Permitting of Oil and Gas

Permitting, siting, and other land use decisions pertaining to natural resources and energy production are best left to the discretion of local officials who have budget authority, relevant local experience, the capacity to assess issues salient to local projects, and are directly responsible to local citizens through public hearings. Our counties have been responsible stewards of CEQA and will continue to implement the highest environmental standards while simultaneously supporting an 'all of the above' energy strategy to keep everyday costs down for our residents. We ask that this Administration and Legislature partner with us in that effort.

We appreciate your consideration of these priorities and reiterate our willingness and desire to continue this dialogue. To state it again clearly: we believe an economically diverse and affordable San Joaquin Valley is vital to California's success. We stand ready to collaborate with you in bringing this vision to fruition for all of us and future generations.

Sincerely,



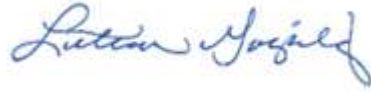
Buddy Mendes, Chairman
Fresno County Board of Supervisors



Leticia Perez, Chairwoman
Kern County Board of Supervisors



Doug Verboon, Chairman
Kings County Board of Supervisors



Leticia Gonzalez
Madera County Board of Supervisors



Josh Pedrozo, Chairman
Merced County Board of Supervisors



Paul Canepa, Chairman
San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors



Buck Condit, Chairman
Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors



Pete VanderPoel, Chairman
Tulare County Board of Supervisors

CC: Senator Anna Caballero
 Senator Melissa Hurtado
 Senator Shannon Grove
 Senator McNerney
 Senator Marie Alvarado-Gil
 Assemblymember Heath Flora
 Assemblymember Rhodesia Ransom
 Assemblymember Juan Alanis
 Assemblymember Alexandra Macedo
 Assemblymember Tom Lackey
 Assemblymember Jasmeet Bains
 Assemblymember David Tangipa
 Assemblymember Esmerelda Soria
 Assemblymember Joaquin Arambula