



For Immediate Release

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REID, ENSIGN, HELLER UNITE TO HELP WALKER RIVER BASIN

Legislation will resolve water rights and land issues

Washington, D.C. – Senators Harry Reid and John Ensign and Congressman Dean Heller announced today that they are working together to develop legislation to address water rights and land issues in Mineral and Lyon Counties.

“The Nevada congressional delegation understands the critical issues facing county, municipal and tribal leaders, and residents of Mineral and Lyon Counties. We are prepared to find immediate and long-term solutions to problems caused by drought, uncertain water rights, and the counties’ changing demographics,” said Reid. “After years of settlement negotiations, the resumption of litigation, and declining levels in Walker Lake, it’s time for Nevada’s congressional delegation to work together to finally resolve many of the issues in the Walker River Basin. As we have with other comprehensive, county-wide legislation, we hope to meet the goals of our constituents, knowing that many compromises will need to be made along the way.”

While the legislation will address many land issues in the counties, a primary goal of the legislation will be to resolve the federal water rights litigation in the Walker Basin area. The officials expect to meet with the interested parties to discuss solutions that will resolve tribal and federal water claims in the Basin, preserve and enhance Walker Lake and its fish and wildlife habitat, and help farmers in Smith and Mason Valleys.

“Ending the litigation in the Walker River Basin is very important for our state’s future,” said Ensign. “The time has come to reach a fair settlement with a bill written by elected representatives, not judges. We also have a tremendous opportunity to help Mineral and Lyon Counties with lands bills that will protect natural resources and enhance economic opportunities. The livelihoods of ranchers and farmers in the Smith and Mason Valleys and the area’s rich agricultural heritage that spans generations will be protected. I also believe there are a number of common-sense measures we can take to move more water

to Walker Lake by making the system more efficient. I am convinced this process and the result will be a win-win for everyone.”

“There are many complex issues facing Mineral and Lyon Counties and the Walker River Tribe,” said Heller. “Growth, drought, and water claims litigation have added to the already difficult circumstances facing all the stakeholders involved. I am committed to protecting not only the health of Walker Lake and the Tribe, but also the farmers and ranchers in Smith and Mason Valleys. I am pleased to work with Senators Reid and Ensign to find a solution that is mutually beneficial all parties involved.”

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