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THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

**Testimony of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords**

Amendment to Water Use Efficiency and Conservation Research Act, H.R. 3957

July 16, 2008

**House Science & Technology Committee Markup**

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Back in May, when the Committee held a hearing on Water Supply Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, one of the expert witnesses was Dr. Stephen Parker, Director of the Water Science and Technology Board of the National Research Council.

Committee members may recall that in his testimony, Dr. Parker discussed recent work undertaken by the Water Science and Technology Board on water supply and water management. He also discussed major challenges facing states and local governments in providing adequate water supplies to meet society's competing and growing needs.

As part of his response to Member questions following the hearing, Dr. Parker conveyed his recommendation for a study of water management practices in use in the U.S. and around the world. The purpose would be to identify effective practices that could be implemented – or implemented more widely – in the United States. My amendment would authorize such a study.

The study would examine innovative, systematic approaches to managing water supply, wastewater, and storm-water in urban areas and surrounding communities. A special emphasis would be placed on studying the interrelationship of water systems with other major systems such as energy and transportation. In addition to looking at practices that are already in place, both here and abroad, the study would identify priority research and development needs going forward. The study would also assess barriers to implementation of new practices.

The study would emphasize “soft path” and “low impact” approaches to water management. The term “soft path” refers to a framework for thinking about how to integrate different water systems (for example, supply, treatment, etc.) and increase overall efficiency of use. Soft path approaches emphasize using the natural capacities of ecosystems to provide filtration services and clean water.

The term “low impact”, in this context, refers to technologies and practices for gathering and using the water that falls on any given site as rain.

Together, these terms describe the cutting edge in thinking about water management. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century water management solutions were often characterized by expensive capital investment projects to transport water great distances and treat it in large, centralized facilities. By contrast, 21<sup>st</sup> century solutions are much more likely to employ “soft path” and “low impact” approaches.

The purpose of this study is to produce a report that will evaluate challenges and opportunities and then and recommend innovative, integrated solutions. The report will serve as a practical reference for planners, scientists, engineers, non-governmental organizations, and regulators concerned with water management. I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

With that, I yield back.

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