

For Immediate Release

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Contact

Sean Bothwell, California Coastkeeper Alliance, 949-291-3401

sbothwell@cacoastkeeper.org

Right to Clean Water Act sails through Senate Judiciary Committee

SB 601 would reinstate rights for Californians that were recently lost at the federal level

Sacramento, Calif. – Late yesterday the California Senate Judiciary Committee showed strong support for the Right to Clean Water Act (SB 601), passing it by a vote of ten to three. Senator Ben Allen introduced the bill in February with the goal of safeguarding California’s water systems by enshrining into state law protections that were previously guaranteed by the federal Clean Water Act. Those protections were significantly weakened through a 2023 U.S. Supreme Court decision.

“California deserves water protections that represent the nature of our waterways,” said Senator Ben Allen, author of SB 601. “Our delicate and now-vulnerable streams and wetlands are interconnected and impact the health of one another across the state. Enshrining the protections provided by SB 601 – the same protections provided by the federal government under the Clean Water Act for decades – will help provide clean water across California for generations to come.”

The Right to Clean Water Act will help California maintain clean water standards. It will ensure the efficient development of state permits that offer the same level of protection against pollution that was previously guaranteed through federal law and create a simplified, consistent framework for every clean water permit in the state. The goal of SB 601 is to maintain the status quo for Californians’ right to clean water at a time when the rest of the nation is at risk of going backwards.

“Californians have enjoyed the right to clean water for more than 50 years,” said **Sean Bothwell, executive director of the California Coastkeeper Alliance**. “Clearly, our state legislators understand what is at stake and are taking a strong stand in favor of this fundamental right. Limiting the impacts of pollution on our waterways is vital to our health and wellbeing.”

The U.S. Supreme Court's *Sackett* decision dramatically weakened clean water protections for many of the creeks, streams and wetlands that feed into California's rivers, lakes, and coastal areas. There are thousands of these types of waterways in California.

"Healthy waters are essential for preserving the delicate balance of California's ecosystems while meeting the needs of our state. The Senate Judiciary Committee's decision to pass Senate Bill 601 makes it very clear: clean water is not negotiable," said **Ashley Overhouse, water policy advisor for Defenders of Wildlife.**

SB 601 has now been approved by all relevant Senate policy committees. It next goes to the Appropriations Committee for approval before moving on to the full Senate for consideration.

"In the face of an environmentally antagonistic Supreme Court and Federal Administration, now more than ever California must protect the health of communities for millions of our residents. The Right to Clean Water Act is a crucial bill to ensure Californians can continue to enjoy protections our precious waters have had for six decades," said **Marquis King Mason, advocacy partnership coordinator, California Environmental Voters.**

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ABOUT CALIFORNIA COASTKEEPER ALLIANCE - California Coastkeeper Alliance represents Waterkeepers programs statewide as they fight for drinkable, swimmable, fishable waters for all Californians. CCKA defends and expands California's protective legislation and strengthens the function of our State Water Board. For more information, visit www.cacoastkeeper.org or @CA_Waterkeepers on social media.

ABOUT CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL VOTERS

California Environmental Voters (EnviroVoters) believes the climate crisis is here and this moment requires transformative change. California has the policy solutions to stop climate change but lacks the political will to do it at the rate and scale that's necessary. EnviroVoters exists to build the political power to solve the climate crisis, advance justice, and create a roadmap for global action. We organize voters, elect and train candidates, and hold lawmakers accountable for bold policy change. We won't stop until we have resilient, healthy, thriving communities, and a democracy and economy that is just and sustainable for all. Join us at www.envirovoters.org.