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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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Representative Ami Bera testimony to the Committee on Budget on March 6, 2013

Chairman Ryan, Ranking Member Van Hollen, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the residents of California's 7th Congressional District. As you begin discussions toward FY2014's budget resolution, I want to call your attention to two projects of critical importance to Sacramento County, the Sacramento/American River levee system and the Folsom dam.

Sacramento — which sits where the Sacramento and American Rivers converge, near the Bay Delta — has the 2nd highest flood risk in the United States. A flood in the Sacramento region would be devastating to the 1.4 million people who live in our metropolitan area. The flood risk could result in closures of I-5/I-80, which are needed as evacuation routes, a shutdown of the Sacramento International Airport, destruction of homes, hospitals, and most importantly a tragic loss of life. Additionally, flooding could result in billions of dollars in potential damage and it could take weeks or months to pump the water out of the region.

To date, the Army Corps has identified 10 projects of national economic importance through Signed Chief Reports. The Natomas levees are one of these critical projects. These levees date from the 1870s, when farmers began building nearly 1,100 miles of protection around the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to control floodwaters and create farmland. Today these levees are in desperate need of critical repair to help prevent a catastrophic disaster.

In a New York Times article, Dr. Robert Bea, professor of engineering at the University of California, Berkeley, warns: "In terms of damage, deaths, and long-term cost, a rupture in the delta levees would be far more destructive than what happened in Hurricane Katrina. This is a ticking bomb." We all witnessed the devastation caused by Superstorm Sandy this past November. However, unlike a slow-moving hurricane, a breach of the levees could occur with little or no warning.

In 2006, Former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger declared a state of emergency for California's levees. He signed an executive order directing agencies to identify, evaluate and repair critical systems. Sacramento is still waiting for these repairs.

The Natomas Basin is surrounded by 42 miles of levees. While 18 miles of those levees have been repaired and updated by the Sacramento Flood Control Agency, the final 24 miles are still slated to be completed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

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The Army Corps is responsible for upgrading and maintaining a vast amount of the delta levees and we need to ensure the proper amount of funding is granted to these and other projects. The Natomas levees are one of ten Army Corps of Engineer Chief Reports projects based in locations ranging from Iowa to Florida, Louisiana to California. These 10 projects are shovel ready and will provide on the ground jobs immediately once funded

As you begin assembling the 2014 budget, I urge this committee to make sure the U.S. Army Corps Chief Report projects are given sufficient funding to maintain and protect our communities. Thank you.

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Supplemental Submission from Representative Ami Bera in regards to testimony at the Committee on Budget on March 6, 2013

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Signed Chief Reports

Cedar River, Cedar Rapids, IA, Flood Risk Management Project

CERP, Central and Southern Florida, Caloosahatchee River (C-43) West Basin Storage Reservoir Project, Hendry County, FL, Supplement

American River Watershed (Common Features) Project, Natomas Basin, Sacramento and Sutter Counties, CA

Louisiana Coastal Area, LA, Ecosystem Restoration, Six Projects (LCA 6)

Surf City and North Topsail Beach, NC, Coastal Storm Damage Reduction Project

CERP, Central and Southern Florida, Caloosahatchee River (C-43) West Basin Storage Reservoir Project, Hendry County, FL

West Onslow Beach and New River Inlet (Topsail Beach), NC

MSCIP Hancock, Harrison and Jackson Counties Comprehensive Plan

Topeka Flood Risk Management Project, Topeka, Kansas

Mid-Chesapeake Bay Island Ecosystem Restoration Project, Chesapeake Bay, Dorchester County, MD

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