

CONGRESSMAN CAL DOOLEY'S VALLEY ACTION PLAN AUGUST 2001 UPDATE

During the first half of 2001, Congressman Cal Dooley has made significant progress on the agenda items outlined in his 2001-2002 Valley Action Plan. He continues to play a leadership role in shaping fiscal policy, trade, education and technology debates in Congress, and he is working to make sure that the national economy grows and that Valley residents are better able to participate in that growth. What follows is a "report card" of progress to date on Congressman Dooley's Valley Action Plan priorities:

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND JOB CREATION

- **Central Valley Empowerment Initiative:** In a May meeting with Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman, and in a meeting with President Bush on his visit to Sequoia National Park in June, Dooley urged them to continue the work of the unique federal task force aimed explicitly at expanding economic growth and job opportunities in the Central Valley. Dooley convinced President Clinton to create the task force in October 2000. Dooley sought commitments from Veneman and Bush on moving forward with convening the seventeen-agency federal task force and to direct California USDA staff to carry out outreach efforts. Both the President and Secretary Veneman responded positively, and Dooley is hopeful that the task force will convene soon.
- **Tax Relief for Valley Residents:** Dooley voted for the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act, a bipartisan measure that will provide significant tax relief to Valley residents over the next ten years. On balance, the bill Dooley supported was the product of compromise and was more fiscally responsible and better for lower-income families than the budget-busting tax bill he opposed in the House a few weeks prior. The bill will help the families of the 20th district by lowering marginal tax rates for all taxpayers, increasing tax relief to families with children, and eliminating the estate tax over ten years which will help the Valley's farm economy.

THE VALLEY'S INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Fresno Courthouse:** In late July, the House approved \$121.225 million in funding that Dooley requested to construct the new federal courthouse in downtown Fresno. Dooley, a longtime champion of the project, requested the funds earlier in the year pointing to the fact that Fresno is currently ranked first on the U.S. Judicial Conference's courthouse construction priority list. Dooley's advocacy for the Fresno courthouse also led him to co-found the 20-member Congressional Courthouse Caucus, which has advocated for full funding of the Judicial Conference priority list so that individual courthouse projects aren't faced with delays.
- **Funding for Valley Transportation:** The House has approved Dooley's funding requests for a number of important transportation projects, including: \$5 million for the construction of a new multi-modal transportation center in downtown Visalia; \$1.5 million to allow the City of Fresno to purchase clean emissions buses; and a direction to the FAA to "give priority" to Kern

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County's Meadows Field when distributing airport improvement funds, to support the construction of a new terminal.

- **Pending Lemoore Naval Air Station Improvements:** Dooley has requested funding for a number of projects to improve operations at Lemoore NAS, including \$1.5 million for the Operations Area Gallery and \$8.38 million for an Aircraft Parking Hangar Apron. Dooley's requests are currently pending before the House Appropriations Committee, which has not yet considered the FY 2002 Military Construction spending bill.

SAFE COMMUNITIES

- **Increasing Investment in Meth Problem:** Dooley continues his leadership in fighting the Valley's methamphetamine production epidemic on a number of fronts. Dooley cosponsored and organized two Central Valley Methamphetamine Summits in Fresno, one focusing on reducing meth supply by strengthening law enforcement, and another focusing on reducing meth demand by expanding access to drug treatment programs. Dooley met with DEA Administrator-Designate Rep. Asa Hutchinson (AR) and other federal officials to increase their awareness of the Valley's meth epidemic.

Following the Meth Summits, Dooley led 10 California Members of Congress in expressing concern about the shortage of FBI and DEA agents assigned to the Central Valley – a shortage that was identified by summit participants as a hurdle to more effective meth enforcement. Dooley hosted meetings with officials from both agencies to make the Valley's case for more agents. Following a news report that FBI officials were considering reassigning some agents out of the Central Valley High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) task force, Dooley sought and received assurances that agents would not be removed from the task force. Dooley also asked federal officials to approve a pending \$1 million funding increase for the Central Valley HIDTA. Finally, Dooley introduced legislation with Sen. Barbara Boxer to provide "drug treatment on demand" to any meth abuser who voluntarily seeks treatment.

- **New Valley Afterschool Centers:** As a result of legislation Dooley strongly supported to create "21st Century Learning Centers," seven new afterschool centers have received federal support this year. Funding this year for new centers include: \$649,834 to Fresno Unified School District; \$719,362 to Hanford Elementary School District (2 centers); \$199,089 to Raisin City Elementary School District; \$185,250 to Tipton Elementary School District; \$787,500 to Tulare County Office of Education; and \$442,450 to West Fresno's New Millennium Institute of Education.

AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY

- **Expanding the Water Supply:** Dooley is a cosponsor of bipartisan legislation by Rep. Ken Calvert to reauthorize the federal-state CALFED program and ensure more reliable agricultural

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water deliveries for Valley farmers and provide increased water storage throughout California. In June Dooley participated in a House Resources Committee field hearing in Modesto to solicit views on the CALFED bill from local growers and water leaders.

- **Increasing Storage and Improving Flood Control:** In June, the House approved Dooley's funding requests for several Valley water storage and flood control projects, including: \$5 million for the 43,000-acre-feet expansion of Terminus Dam; \$770,000 for planning and design of a Success Dam reservoir enlargement project; \$500,000 for flood control studies on Arroyo Pasajero; \$200,000 for flood control studies on Poso Creek; \$100,000 for flood control studies on Frazier Creek; and \$25,000 for flood control studies on White River and Deer Creek.
- **Increasing Access to Foreign Markets:** Recognizing that expanded export opportunities are critical to the future of Valley agriculture and the region's economy, Dooley continues to play a leading role in expanding U.S. access to foreign markets, including continued trade expansion with China and increased access to the burgeoning Latin American market. Critical to this expanded trade agenda is the effort to grant the president Trade Promotion Authority (formerly known as "fast track"), to ensure swifter and more effective trade negotiations. Dooley has been working to craft a bipartisan compromise plan to ensure passage of trade promotion authority, and has begun discussions with Ways and Means Chairman Bill Thomas (CA) on the substance of a TPA compromise. Dooley is also a strong proponent of expanded trade through the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), a new round of World Trade Organization (WTO) talks, and further trade agreements.
- **2002 Farm Bill:** After being named earlier this year as the top-ranking Democrat on the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Ag Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management, Dooley has played a leading role in crafting the farm bill reauthorization. In late July, the House Agriculture Committee approved a farm bill rewrite that reflected several provisions advocated by Dooley. As debate continues on the farm bill, Dooley will continue to push for his key Valley priorities, including the development of a market-based commodity program; increased ag research funding; expanded market opportunities; and a strengthened fight against pests and disease.
- **New Farmworker Training Program:** Dooley was successful in writing into the Farm Bill the creation of a new Farmworker Training Program, which would provide \$10 million in grants to nonprofit organizations to train farmworkers to use new technologies and provide greater stability in the Valley's agricultural labor force. The program would support efforts such as the Valley's innovative Skill Our Agribusiness Region (SOAR) farmworker skill training project.

BETTER SCHOOLS AND HEALTH CARE ACCESS

- **"Three R's" School Reform Bill:** Dooley worked with Sen. Joseph Lieberman (CT) and other members of the congressional New Democrat Coalition in pushing legislation to

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comprehensively overhaul the federal investment in education, for the first time tying funding to improvement in student achievement and directing more federal resources to the neediest schools. Dooley and other New Democrats – a group of nearly 100 pro-growth centrist Democrats in the House and Senate -- were successful in having several of their priorities incorporated into the bipartisan House education reform bill, including increased accountability and focus on results, increased funds to disadvantaged students, and increased flexibility and performance-based funding.

- **Expand Health Care Access:** Dooley introduced the Small Business Health Fairness Act, which would expand access to health insurance for currently uninsured low- and middle-income Valley residents by reducing the regulatory burden on employee and trade associations that offer health plans. The bipartisan bill, which is supported by numerous agricultural groups seeking a middle-ground approach to expanding health coverage, would make it more affordable for small business owners and the self-employed to purchase health insurance through association health plans.

LEADERSHIP FOR THE VALLEY

- **Energy Investment Plan:** Dooley joined the House in approving a plan to lower consumers' energy costs by expanding energy production, investing in renewable and emerging energy technologies, and encouraging greater energy efficiency. The bill is intended to provide a comprehensive national energy policy consisting of conservation, production, research initiatives, and tax incentives. While Dooley hoped the bill would do more to encourage energy efficiency and research, he supported it because of the important relief it can provide Valley residents who continue to face record energy bills.
- **Keeping Valley Families Unified:** After an April 30 deadline passed for a temporary program that allows families to stay unified in the U.S. while immigrants to apply for permanent residency, Dooley voted for a four-month extension of the program, and supports legislation to permanently extend the 245(i) deadline. Dooley also applauded President Bush for considering a measure to grant legal residency to as many as three million Mexican immigrants, arguing that such a measure would not only help meet the Valley economy's labor needs, but would also ensure that Valley families are kept together.
- **Punch Card Vote Study:** Dooley announced that a congressional investigation initiated at the request of several members, including Dooley showed that voters in the 20th congressional district who voted on punch-card machines were more than twice as likely to have their ballots discarded as voters using optical scan machines. Dooley cited the report as evidence of the importance of replacing punch card machines – which are still used only in the Kern County portion of the 20th District -- to ensure all Valley residents' votes are counted.

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- **“Open Door” Hours:** Dooley has hosted a series of “Open Door” hours to give his constituents the chance to meet with him one-on-one, share their concerns, and get assistance with problems with the federal government. By late August, Dooley will have held “Open Doors” in the communities of Arvin, Bakersfield, Coalinga, Corcoran, Cutler, Delano, Fowler, Fresno, Hanford, Kerman, Lamont, Lemoore, Mendota, Orosi, Parlier, Selma, Shafter, and Wasco.
- **Congressional “Power Player”:** Congressional Quarterly, a respected nonpartisan news organization covering Congress, named Dooley one of 23 influential “Power Players 2001” in the House of Representatives. Dooley was one of only ten House Democrats who are expected to play key power-brokering roles in the closely divided 107th Congress. Dooley was recognized by the magazine both for his leadership on natural resources issues, for which he was picked as the lone House “power player,” and for his leadership of the New Democrat Coalition.
- **Spanish Language Media Outreach:** Dooley launched an initiative to better communicate his work in Congress to the Valley’s Spanish-language media outlets. Recognizing the need to communicate as closely as possible with the Valley’s rapidly growing Latino communities, Dooley has designated a bilingual staff member to conduct outreach and respond to Spanish-language inquiries, is distributing press releases in Spanish, and is holding roundtable discussions with Valley Spanish-language media.