

Imperial Valley Weekly

Imperial Hometown Review

THURSDAY, AUGUST 14, 2003

Filner Blasts Interior For Not Joining Court Action

Congressman Bob Filner has ripped the U.S. Department of the Interior for its denial of a request, signed by 17 members of Congress, that interior join with California water agencies and ask the court for a delay in the review of the Imperial Irrigation District's reasonable and beneficial use of Colorado River water. A delay in the Department's current review, also known the Part 417 process, would allow California water agencies to focus on negotiations on the Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA) - a much more significant water issue.

"What we have here is a classic case of big government ignoring the needs of local people," said

Congressman Filner. "Everyone in the Southern California knows it is crucial that we reach agreement on the use of water flowing from the Colorado River. But the Department of the Interior continues to throw huge wrenches into these negotiations!"

Without a delay in the Part 417 process, the current progression of events will lead to endless litigation over water allocation. Litigation has already diverted resources away from the much more important negotiations on the QSA.

Congressman Filner and 16 other members of Congress asked Secretary of Interior Gale Norton to join with water agencies in

Southern California and ask the court to temporarily defer the process that reviews reasonable and beneficial use of Colorado River water. This would allow Interior and the California agencies to devote their full energies to crafting a compromise on the QSA.

In their letter of response, the Department of the Interior stated, "this option does not appear to be feasible at this time."

"How can it not be feasible?" asked Congressman Filner. "It's just a matter of asking the court's permission. Southern California's economy depends on this agreement!"