



Senator Feinstein Gains Committee Approval for
\$4 million to Clean up Perchlorate Contamination
June 22, 2004

Washington, DC – In the wake of growing concerns about perchlorate contamination, U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) won Senate Appropriations Committee approval today for the Defense Department to spend \$4 million to clean up perchlorate in the Inland Empire.

The funding was included by the Appropriations Committee in the FY 2005 Defense Appropriations Bill. Specifically, it would provide \$4 million for the Environmental Security Technical Certification Program to conduct research and a demonstration of clean-up technologies in the Rialto-Colton Basin, where a seven-mile plume was discovered in 2002. This plume has contaminated 22 drinking water wells in western San Bernardino County, jeopardizing water supplies for 500,000 local residents.

“What’s clear is that perchlorate is now permeating the food chain – in row crops, lettuce, tomatoes and dairy products. It’s a very serious thing, and the number one contributor is the Department of Defense,” Senator Feinstein said.

“The bottom line is that the State and Federal governments must work closely together to address this issue. I don’t want to see the dairy industry suffer, but this contamination has to be rapidly cleaned up and we need the help of the Defense Department in a major way.”

In addition to the funding approved today, the Appropriations Committee adopted a provision proposed by Senator Feinstein that the Department of Defense “should expedite the development of a plan to remediate perchlorate contamination. Once that plan is developed, the Committee believes that the Department should take appropriate action to implement this plan.”

And the Committee reiterated that the DOD should provide a report to Congress on Perchlorate contamination as required in the FY 2004 Military Construction Conference Report, which was due April 30. To date, the DOD has not provided the report.

Last week, the U.S. Senate approved an amendment to the Department of Defense (DOD) Authorization bill, sponsored by Senator Feinstein, calling on the Pentagon to remediate perchlorate contamination on DOD sites where the chemical threatens the health and safety of Americans.

Perchlorate, which is used in munitions and jet fuels, has contaminated drinking water supplies or the environment in 34 states. If ingested, perchlorate can interfere with thyroid function, and scientific evidence suggests that this effect can impair the normal development of the brain in the fetuses and newborn babies, and permanently damage cognitive abilities and brain function in affected children.