

2. A RESOLUTION CALLING UPON THE FEDERAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS TO ADDRESS THE DEVASTATING IMPACTS OF INTERNATIONAL TRANSBOUNDARY POLLUTION FLOWS INTO THE SOUTHERNMOST REGIONS OF CALIFORNIA AND THE PACIFIC OCEAN

Source: San Diego County Division

Concurrence of five or more cities/city officials

Cities: Calexico; Coronado; Imperial Beach; San Diego

Individual City Officials: City of Brawley: Mayor Pro Tem Norma Kastner-Jauregui; Council Members Sam Couchman, Luke Hamby, and George Nava. City of Escondido: Deputy Mayor Consuelo Martinez. City of La Mesa: Council Member Bill Baber. City of Santee: Mayor John Minto, City of Vista: Mayor Judy Ritter and Council Member Amanda Young Rigby

Referred to: Environmental Quality Policy Committee

WHEREAS, international transboundary rivers that carry water across the border from Mexico into Southern California are a major source of sewage, trash, chemicals, heavy metals and toxins; and

WHEREAS, transboundary flows threaten the health of residents in the United States and Mexico, harm important estuarine land and water of international significance, force closure of beaches, damage farmland, adversely impact the South San Diego County and Imperial County economy; compromise border security, and directly affect U.S. military readiness; and

WHEREAS, a significant amount of untreated sewage, sediment, hazardous chemicals and trash have been entering southern California through both the Tijuana River Watershed (75 percent of which is within Mexico) and New River flowing into southern California's coastal waterways and residential and agricultural communities in Imperial County eventually draining into the Salton Sea since the 1930s; and

WHEREAS, in February 2017, an estimated 143 million gallons of raw sewage flowed into the Tijuana River and ran downstream into the Pacific Ocean and similar cross border flows have caused beach closures at Border Field State Park that include 211 days in 2015; 162 days in 2016; 168 days in 2017; 101 days in 2018; and 187 days to date for 2019 as well as closure of a number of other beaches along the Pacific coastline each of those years; and

WHEREAS, approximately 132 million gallons of raw sewage has discharged into the New River flowing into California through communities in Imperial County, with 122 million gallons of it discharged in a 6-day period in early 2017; and

WHEREAS, the presence of pollution on state and federal public lands is creating unsafe conditions for visitors; these lands are taxpayer supported and intended to be managed for recreation, resource conservation and the enjoyment by the public, and

WHEREAS, the current insufficient and degrading infrastructure in the border zone poses a significant risk to the public health and safety of residents and the environment on both

sides of the border, and places the economic stress on cities that are struggling to mitigate the negative impacts of pollution; and

WHEREAS, the 1944 treaty between the United States and Mexico regarding *Utilization of Waters of the Colorado and Tijuana Rivers and of the Rio Grande* allocates flows on trans-border rivers between Mexico and the United States, and provides that the nations, through their respective sections of the International Boundary Water Commission shall give control of sanitation in cross border flows the highest priority; and

WHEREAS, in 1993, the United States and Mexico entered into the *Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the United Mexican States Concerning the Establishment of a North American Development Bank* which created the North American Development Bank (NADB) to certify and fund environmental infrastructure projects in border-area communities; and

WHEREAS, public concerns in response to widespread threats to public health and safety, damage to fish and wildlife resources and degradation to California's environment resulting from transboundary river flow pollution in the southernmost regions of the state requires urgent action by the Federal and State governments, and

WHEREAS, Congress authorized funding under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Safe Drinking Water Act and established the State and Tribal Assistance Grants (STAG) program for the U.S.-Mexico Border Water Infrastructure Program (BWIP) in 1996 to provide grants for high-priority water, wastewater, and storm-water infrastructure projects within 100 kilometers of the southern border; and

WHEREAS, the EPA administers the STAG and BWIP programs, and coordinates with the North American Development Bank (NADB) to allocate BWIP grant funds to projects in the border zone; and

WHEREAS, since its inception, the BWIP program has provided funding for projects in California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas that would not have been constructed without the grant program; and

WHEREAS, the BWIP program was initially funded at \$100 million per year, but, over the last 20 years, has been continuously reduced to its current level of \$10 million; and

WHEREAS, in its FY 2020 Budget Request, the Administration proposed to eliminate the BWIP program; and

WHEREAS, officials from EPA Region 9, covering California, have identified a multitude of BWIP-eligible projects along the southern border totaling over \$300 million; and

WHEREAS, without federal partnership through the BWIP program and state support to address pollution, cities that are impacted by transboundary sewage and toxic waste flows are

left with limited resources to address a critical pollution and public health issue and limited legal remedies to address the problem; and

WHEREAS, the National Association of Counties, (NACo) at their Annual Conference on July 15, 2019 and the U.S. Conference of Mayors at their Annual Conference on in July 1, 2019 both enacted resolutions calling on the federal and state governments to work together to fund and address this environmental crisis; and

WHEREAS, local governments and the public support the State's primary objectives in complying with environmental laws including the Clean Water Act, Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, and Endangered Species Act and are supported by substantial public investments at all levels of government to maintain a healthy and sustainable environment for future residents of California, and

WHEREAS, League of California Cities policy has long supported efforts to ensure water quality and oppose contamination of water resources; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED at the League General Assembly, assembled at the League Annual Conference on October 18, 2019 in Long Beach, that the League calls upon the Federal and State governments to restore and ensure proper funding to the U.S- Mexico Border Water Infrastructure Program (BWIP) and recommit to working bi-nationally to develop and implement long-term solutions to address serious water quality and contamination issues, such as discharges of untreated sewage and polluted sediment and trash-laden transboundary flows originating from Mexico, that result in significant health, environmental, and safety concerns in communities along California's southern border impacting the state.