

[Bakersfield Observed : Valley Needs Reliable Supply Of Water And Jobs](#)

By Kevin McCarthy

California has been the nation's top agricultural producer and exporter for decades, and our region is a main reason why. Last year, we produced \$4.7 billion worth of crops – grapes, almonds, pistachios, milk and citrus topped the list – that supported countless jobs and small businesses in our community. One of the single most important ways to ensure the continued success of our agricultural industry, and the jobs it supports, is a reliable water supply.

Today I spoke at Vision 2061, a water conference hosted by the Kern County Water Agency (KCWA) to mark their 50th anniversary and to begin to find solutions to the state's water challenges over the next fifty years. I don't have to tell you those challenges are steep. We face a rapidly expanding population, government overregulation and over-litigation, not to mention the ever-present threat of drought. The good news is that we have some great minds on top of these pressing issues. After all, Jim Beck and the folks at the KCWA haven't helped build one of the world's leading water agencies by accident.

From cutting unnecessary red tape to building additional storage and conveyance systems and continuing to innovate for conservation, there are many ways to get water flowing more reliably through California. Right now, I am pushing three bills (H.R. 869, H.R. 1837 and H.R.1604) that would increase the amount of water flowing to our community, create jobs and reduce the layers of bureaucracy and paperwork for water projects. I know much more must be done, but this conference has demonstrated that we are on the right track. The ideas are there, the will is there, and I trust that our community and water experts will continue to do everything possible to ensure we have the water we need to thrive for the next fifty years and beyond.

Water is not the only thing that will ensure Bakersfield's continued success; the young people our community produces continue to give me high hopes for the future. I have two young men from Bakersfield currently interning in our Washington D.C. office: Jack Pandol, who recently graduated from Washington & Lee University in Lexington, Virginia; and Jess Thomas, who studied at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. Their hard work, dedication and eagerness to serve the constituents of our congressional district make me certain that they will accomplish great things and make Bakersfield proud.

For those still in high school, I'm hosting a U.S. Service Academy Forum this Saturday, which will allow students and parents to get detailed information on the application process, academy life and career opportunities in the military. I hope to see many of you there at 10 a.m. at the Kern County Board of Supervisors' Chambers. Also, in case you aren't able to make it but still are interested, KGOV will air the forum live on its supported channels, and on its website at www.co.kern.ca.us/gsd/kgov/. If you have any questions, please call my office at 661-327-3611.