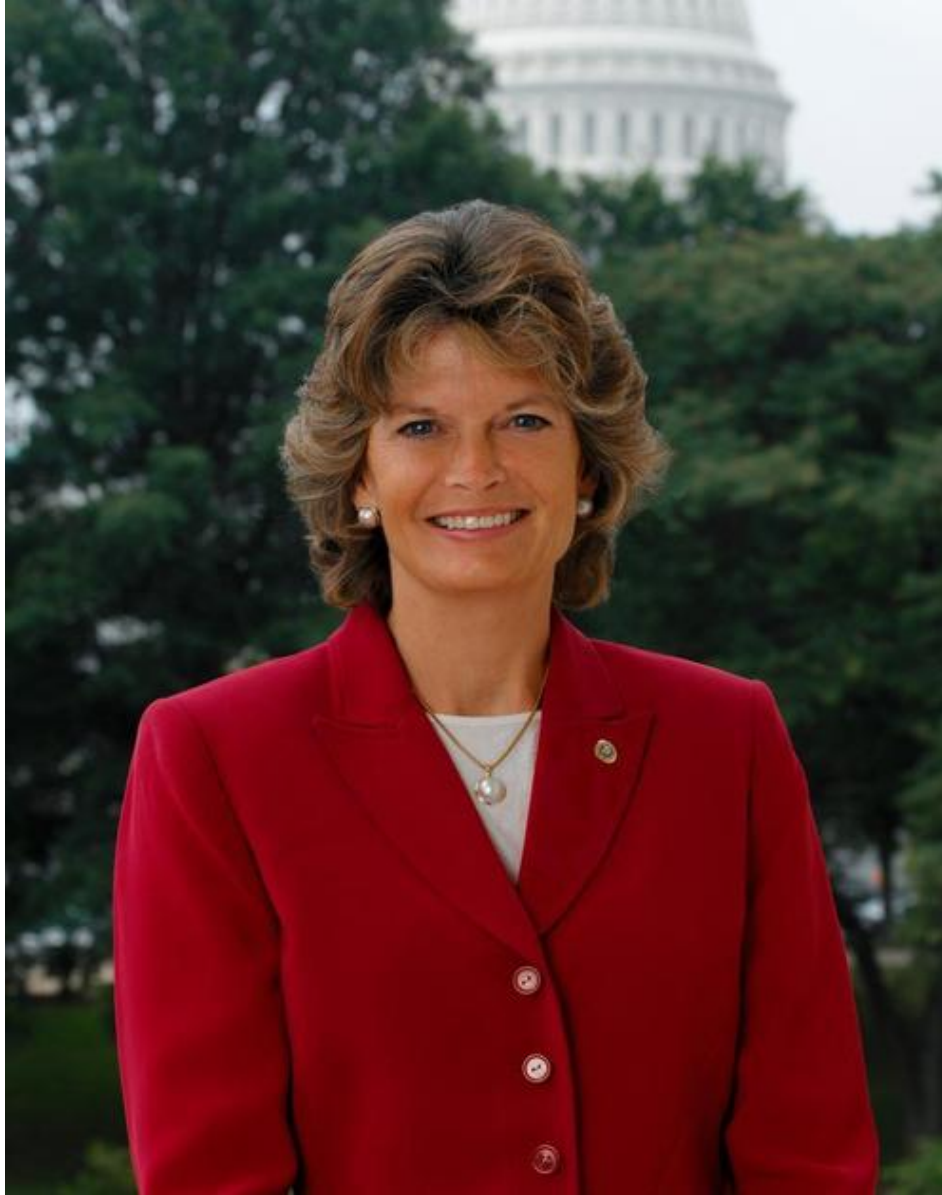


Farmers, ag leaders bend Murkowski's ear during Valley fundraising visit

By John
Ellis



Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski

U.S. Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#) came to Fresno earlier this month for what could only be described as a perfect mutually beneficial arrangement.

The Alaska Republican got to stock her campaign coffers with around \$100,000 at a lunch fundraiser at the Sunnyside Country Club, and around 50 central San Joaquin Valley farmers and agricultural leaders who paid the entry fee got to bend her ear about the region's water situation.

This was important to Valley ag because Murkowski is in a very unique situation — she's chair of the Senate's

Energy and Natural Resources Committee and also heads up the Senate Appropriations Committee's subcommittee on the environment.

That's a combination that gives Murkowski quite a bit of power over Senate legislation that is important to this region. The final benefit is that Murkowski is close friends with Dianne Feinstein, California's senior senator.

Among those in attendance were Rep. Devin Nunes, R-Tulare, former Secretary of State Bill Jones and both farmers and farm groups from the Valley's west and east sides.

Attendees said Murkowski told attendees that she was just learning about the Valley's water problems, which some found interesting given her friendship with Feinstein. Murkowski was able to take over leadership of the committees when Republicans won control of the Senate in last November's election.

Valley ag leaders are frustrated because they want the Senate to act on water legislation that has been passed by the U.S. House, or pass its own bill that can spark negotiations between the two chambers.

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