

OPENING STATEMENT

Today's legislative agenda focuses on two water rights settlement affecting five New Mexico Pueblos. It is unacceptable that there has been 83 years worth of outstanding litigation between the Aamodt Case, affecting the Pueblos of Nambe, Pojoaque, Tesuque San Ildefonso; and the Abeyta case, affecting the Taos Pueblo. We have the chance today with H.R. 3254 and H.R. 3342 to settle 83 years of litigation.

To quote Mr. Cordova, in regard to the Taos settlement, but I think it can also apply to Aamodt, these settlements will **“build a relationship for all parties the future—one that is based on mutual trust, respect and cooperation, something that has been missing historically.”** Welcome Mr. Cordova and Chairman Dorame. Thank you for being here today.

We are also pleased to welcome DL Sanders from the New Mexico State Engineer's office, TVAA President Martinez and Santa Fe County Commissioner Montoya to our hearing today for the state and local perspective. While it's often perceived Water Rights Settlements benefit primarily the tribes, it is also important to recognize the role of settlements in bring water certainty and peace to the entire valley.

To round up our all New Mexican Panel, we welcome back Commissioner Connor. I expect that the Administration recognizes the hard work the five pueblos have done to address concerns regarding the waiver language, application of the criteria and procedures, and the total cost. In fact, since our hearing last September, Taos waiver language in H.R. 3254 has become the boiler plate language for the Department. This is no doubt a testament to their hard work and eagerness to bring finality.

Thank you all for traveling all the way to Washington, DC to be here with us today. I look forward to your testimonies.