

Water and Power Subcommittee Hearing on 6.17.10

Chairwoman Grace F. Napolitano

Opening Statement

Today's legislative hearing agenda focuses on two pieces of legislation that are important to the Water and Power Subcommittee: H.R. 4719 which calls for the establishment of the Southwest Border Region Water Task Force and H.R. 5487 that would amend the Water Resources Research Act of 1984. Both of these pieces of legislation provide guidance and support to the management and study of water resources in the United States.

Welcome to Mr. John Tubbs, here today representing the Administration and the Department of the Interior. The Department of the Interior plays an important role in the management and direction of the water and science programs in our country. We look forward to your testimony regarding the Administrations' position on providing adequate and clean water supplies to people along the 2,000 mile border from Texas to California. We are equally interested in hearing the Administration's position on the importance of supporting higher education and applied research on water supply, water yield and management issues facing our nation and territories.

The first bill we are hearing is H.R. 4719: A bill to establish a Southwest Border Region Water Taskforce, sponsored by our friend and colleague Representative Ciro Rodriguez of Texas. The taskforce would be asked to assess the drinking water and sanitation needs of the colonias, determine if the needs are being met, and prioritize water projects in the region.

To be clear, this bill does not authorize new projects to be built nor does it appropriate funds to build projects in the region. This bill looks for a better and more transparent way of managing federal funds in the region, to be more efficient in prioritizing projects, and to ensure that the need for safe, reliable water in these communities is met. Communities exposed to threats like Hepatitis, gastrointestinal and other water borne diseases in the United States today should not be accepted.

Although other issues, such as immigration, are a concern in the region, we should not lose sight of an equally important issue: the right for American citizens to have access to clean water on this side of the border.

Our second bill is H.R. 5487: A bill to amend the Water Resources Research Act of 1984 to reauthorize grants for and require applied water supply research regarding the water resources research and technology institutes established under that Act. I especially welcome Dr. Swackhamer from the University of Minnesota and Dr. Vaux from the University of

California system, both here to testify on the importance and relevance of water research supported by the National Water Research Institutes. You have come many miles to be with us and to share your personal experience with the program.

Our Nation faces many concerns about water quantity and quality. It is now more important than ever that we develop and maintain our scientific relevance and intellectual capacity by investing in the professionals that we need to help us protect, manage, and provide clean and adequate water supplies for our livelihoods and the environment.

We are facing incredible challenges in meeting the water needs of our people and generations to come. As we are learning every day, we must have trained, critical scientific thinkers and engineers who can work collaboratively in a multi-disciplinary approach to tackle the water problems of today and tomorrow. The Water Resource Research program is built on the concept of leveraging federal dollars with other academic, federal, state and private dollars to provide the basis for developing applied solutions to water problems for today and tomorrow.

As we go forward with this bill, I would like to stress the importance of having better access to the results of these studies. USGS should work directly with the water agencies and other stakeholders who are the beneficiaries of this water research. Our goal should be to make all of the

research easily available to all users and areas of the country. We want the USGS to provide the reports on a timely basis and provide full transparency of where the research money is going.

Thank you to all the witnesses for your testimony and being here today. I now want to welcome my colleague and Ranking Member, Mr. Tom McClintock, and ask him for any opening statement he may have.