



3/31/23

To:

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

RE: Testimony in Support of HB 3124, the Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security Package

Dear Chair Helm, Vice-Chair Owens, Vice-Chair Hartman, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of Swalley Irrigation District to express strong support for House Bill 3124, the Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security Package (BiDRAWS) proposed by Representative Helm and Representative Owens. I'd like to highlight the importance of certain provisions in that bill that provide match funding for irrigation districts to unlock and leverage federal dollars for irrigation modernization projects. These projects will help the state be more resilient to drought and water scarcity, as well as support energy conservation in agriculture. Investments in capacity for state agencies, data collection, convening of stakeholders, modernization of water infrastructure, planning functions, and other components will put the state on the path to leading the nation in managing water resources.

In order to implement large-scale, multi-benefit projects to modernize irrigation infrastructure and be more resilient to drought, many districts, including ours, have utilized federal programs such as NRCS's Watershed & Flood Prevention Operations and Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART for support. These programs play a key role in planning, designing, and implementing water conservation and resiliency projects, but they still require some portion of project funding to come from non-federal sources. Farmers are tapped out, and state grants supporting our projects are slim pickings, often falling short. Our district is committed to modernizing our system and conserving water for the benefit of all, but we require ample state funding to meet match requirements for implementing our identified projects in 2023-2025 and beyond. Without solid and reliable state funding our projects stall out and become shelved. HB 3124 contains the match funding districts need to fully utilize and leverage the infrastructure dollars that the federal government has made available. With permits in-hand, federal dollars at our door, and engineering designs at-the-ready, we are shovel-ready should ample match funding become available.

I urge you to support the important funding components in HB 3124 and ensure that state match funding for irrigation modernization projects remains a part of the final bill. We look forward to following the progress of this and other bills that support the BiDRAWS framework.

Sincerely,

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