



HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 14-1018

BY REPRESENTATIVE(S) Saine and Becker, Buck, Buckner, Conti, Coram, Court, DelGrosso, Dore, Duran, Everett, Exum, Fields, Fischer, Foote, Garcia, Gardner, Gerou, Ginal, Hamner, Holbert, Hullinghorst, Humphrey, Joshi, Kagan, Kraft-Tharp, Labuda, Landgraf, Lawrence, Lebsock, Lee, May, McCann, McLachlan, McNulty, Melton, Mitsch Bush, Moreno, Murray, Navarro, Nordberg, Pabon, Peniston, Pettersen, Primavera, Priola, Rankin, Rosenthal, Ryden, Salazar, Schafer, Scott, Singer, Sonnenberg, Stephens, Swalm, Szabo, Tyler, Vigil, Waller, Williams, Wilson, Wright, Young, Ferrandino;
also SENATOR(S) Marble, Aguilar, Cadman, Grantham, Herpin, Jahn, Kerr, King, Lambert, Lundberg, Nicholson, Renfroe, Rivera, Tochtrop, Zenzinger, Carroll.

CONCERNING THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVING WATER SUPPLIES FOR COLORADO'S AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY.

WHEREAS, Colorado is semi-arid, with annual precipitation of less than 20 inches per year for most of the state, which means that agriculture requires irrigation to maximize productivity; and

WHEREAS, Agriculture contributes about \$40 billion to Colorado's total economy and is the dominant sector of the economy, both in jobs and productivity, for many rural counties; and

WHEREAS, More than 85% of Colorado's water use is for agriculture, but a growing amount is required for municipal and industrial uses; and

WHEREAS, Colorado's population is projected to nearly double by 2050, and while water demand for municipal and industrial uses is not expected to double during that time due to increases in efficiency and water conservation, municipal and industrial demand is expected to increase by about 50%; and

WHEREAS, The Colorado water conservation board has been conducting a statewide water supply initiative to study current and projected water supplies, demands, and projects and processes that can be used to meet those demands; and

WHEREAS, Preliminary indications from the statewide water supply initiative are that water demands for municipal and industrial uses by 2030 will increase by at least 600,000 acre-feet of water, and perhaps as many as 800,000 acre-feet, and that currently identified projects and processes to meet these future demands will meet only about 80% of that increase, leading to a gap of at least 120,000 acre-feet; and

WHEREAS, Often the first and easiest source of water for growing municipalities is the purchase of agricultural water rights and their subsequent change to municipal use, which leads to the permanent dry-up of farms and ranches and devastating impacts on rural economies, the so-called "buy and dry" option; and

WHEREAS, The statewide water supply initiative estimates that by 2050, Colorado may lose between 500,000 and 700,000 acres of currently irrigated farmland; and

WHEREAS, The General Assembly must continue to develop and enact alternatives to the "buy and dry" option in order to protect Colorado's agricultural economy and rural communities while balancing the need to satisfy agricultural water demands with the need to meet environmental, recreational, municipal, and industrial demands; and

WHEREAS, Positive examples of such alternatives enacted in 2013 include acts to adjust and clarify the adjudication standards for water storage, protect old irrigation water rights whose decrees were ambiguous regarding the amount of acreage that may be irrigated under the water right, incentivize the conservation of designated groundwater, and protect water rights, typically old irrigation rights, with an erroneously located point of diversion by allowing the owners to apply for a correction in the point of diversion; and

WHEREAS, Positive examples of such alternatives enacted in previous years include acts authorizing interruptible water supply agreements, fallowing contracts, and water banks; and

WHEREAS, Groundwater supplies are critical to agriculture, and every effort should be made to ensure a sustainable yield from alluvial aquifers, particularly in light of the 2013 flooding that saturated the ground in many parts of the state; and

WHEREAS, Irrigated land is vital to Colorado's wildlife and the beauty of Colorado, for example as memorialized by Kathy Lee Bates in her famous lyrics in "America the Beautiful", which was inspired by her view of Colorado's eastern plains from the top of Pikes Peak; now, therefore,

Be It Resolved by the House of Representatives of the Sixty-ninth General Assembly of the State of Colorado, the Senate concurring herein:

(1) That the General Assembly:

(a) Working with the executive branch and Colorado's water community, pledges to continue its efforts to address Colorado's forecast water supply-demand imbalance in ways that protect, to the maximum extent practicable, Colorado's irrigated agriculture, minimize the dry-up of irrigated agriculture, and ensure full mitigation whenever water is removed from irrigated lands;

(b) Supports the expansion and utilization of existing reservoirs in the state as a means of efficiently capturing and using this precious resource;

(c) Must remain cognizant of the importance of Colorado's irrigated agriculture and its contributions to Colorado's culture, economy, beauty, and natural heritage;

(d) Must encourage and invest in information and education outreach efforts to increase Coloradans' "agricultural literacy" concerning the many contributions and benefits of Colorado's irrigated agriculture;

(e) Recognizes that:

(I) The value of a water right lies in the certainty that it can be exercised within the priority system while protecting senior property rights; and

(II) Colorado's laws must provide that certainty; and

(f) Must continue to act as the guardian not only of Colorado's water, given Colorado's status as the quintessential headwaters state, but also of Colorado's prior appropriation doctrine.

Be It Further Resolved, That copies of this Joint Resolution be sent to Governor John Hickenlooper and to the board of county commissioners of each county in the state.

Mark Ferrandino
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES

Morgan Carroll
PRESIDENT OF
THE SENATE

Marilyn Eddins
CHIEF CLERK OF THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES

Cindi Markwell
SECRETARY OF
THE SENATE

APPROVED _____

John W. Hickenlooper
GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF COLORADO