

Second Regular Session  
Sixty-ninth General Assembly  
STATE OF COLORADO

INTRODUCED

LLS NO. R14-0010.01 Thomas Morris x4218

HJR14-1018

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HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 14-1018

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

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

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

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

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.  
*Capital letters indicate new material to be added to existing statute.*  
*Dashes through the words indicate deletions from existing statute.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

29           WHEREAS, Positive examples of such alternatives enacted in  
30 2013 include acts to adjust and clarify the adjudication standards for  
31 water storage, protect old irrigation water rights whose decrees were  
32 ambiguous regarding the amount of acreage that may be irrigated under  
33 the water right, incentivize the conservation of designated groundwater,  
34 and protect water rights, typically old irrigation rights, with an  
35 erroneously located point of diversion by allowing the owners to apply for

1 a correction in the point of diversion; and

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

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

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

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

16 (1) That the General Assembly:

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

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

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

29 (d) Recognizes that:

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

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

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