

HB 3298 Larson

House Natural Resources Hearing- April 8, 2015

Michele Gangnes, Director 512-461-3179

League of Independent Voters of Texas, and Lee County Landowner

Chairman Keffer, Representative Larson, and Members,

My name is Michele Gangnes and I am a Lee County landowner and a director of the League of independent Voters of Texas. WE OPPOSE HB3298.

Like Mr. Box, I tried to find something good in this bill. We do need an independent, advance study of the issues this bill speaks to, but also many it doesn't. Mr. Box and I spent time drafting amendments to give the bill objectivity, but we couldn't do enough. I was naïve enough to think the bill should at least encourage or even demand independence and objectivity, since Texans demand those qualities from you as their policy makers.

There has to be more to this conversation than “move water, move water”, while we watch Austin and San Antonio vie to be the biggest city. Instead, the bill “findings” seem to indicate that is all we are willing to study and that isn't acceptable.

There is no reference to “conservation”, let alone prioritizing conservation or maximizing conservation in our cities and in our agriculture; no finding of the role of “science”, let alone sound science or best science, to assure management of groundwater and surface water is “scientifically sound management”, not blatant exploitation;

and there's no finding of the need to maintain our water resources "in perpetuity".

Likewise, there was no mention of the vital role of all stakeholders in an objective process or the need for affordability for ratepayers, because stakeholders who want to move water are well-represented in the bill, and ratepayers will surely be available to "enhance" those stakeholders' "investments" as the bill requires.

Moving water is the principal purpose of the bill and is the only principle that counts.

We all know what's happening in California because of drought and mismanagement of water. But the New York Times says "[A]t a time when Californians need to be conserving water the most, many are doing the opposite", based on recent water use numbers, primarily in Los Angeles.

We heard some of you say two weeks ago "we have to conserve first and we have to have sound science". How can our message now be that moving water is an alternative to conservation? Our citizens are just as susceptible to turning on the tap and being lulled into complacency as Los Angeles and southern California have been while northern California moved water to them all these years.

The only message TWDB will hear, and the one I heard most loud and clear two weeks ago, is "we have to remove impediments and move water." But how do we maintain our brilliant state, our booming economy and our exploding population if we risk exhausting our water

supplies through poor management? We need to return the phrase “in perpetuity” to our vocabulary.

Sixty percent of our water use already flows from groundwater. Groundwater must also feed our seeps and springs to sustain our rivers and reservoirs. If we don’t find “balance” ---between groundwater pumping for cities, farms and industries, and maintaining sustainable aquifers; between groundwater pumping and protecting the contributions of groundwater to surface water -- we can kiss perpetuity goodbye, first for our water and then for our state.

Don’t make TWDB a rubber stamp for the proposition “at all costs, move water” unless we determine the casualties of those costs as part of TWDB’s work. Don’t give TWDB *carte blanche* to draw a roadmap for mining aquifers and moving water to where we want it, simply because we have pre-ordained it as the only answer for Texas.

The League’s members are not “un-Texan” because they ask you to first protect and preserve our aquifers in perpetuity. Our rural members do feel threatened, but they understand the need to share water—if it’s used wisely. We’re stakeholders, rural and urban alike, who want to be part of the solution for a mutual future --- not mutually exclusive futures.

Please re-start your thinking and your mindset with the well-intentioned amendments Mr. Box and I have presented to you --- but please don’t let this bill in its present form see the light of day.

Thank you, I’m pleased to take questions.