

Texas Bills Would Dedicate \$2 Billion for Water

- by Cody Permenter , January 10, 2013

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Construction finishing on a two million gallon water tank in a 13,000-acre water well field owned by the Colorado River Municipal Water District near Wickett, Texas. The land and existing infrastructure, purchased from Luminant Generation using state funds, as well as newly constructed water wells and pipeline, can pump up to 30 million gallons of water out of the field a day.

State Rep. [Allan Ritter](#), R-Nederland, filed two bills Thursday that would allocate a one-time, \$2 billion sum from Texas' [Rainy Day Fund](#) to create a revolving fund for water-supply projects.

Ritter, who chairs the House Natural Resources Committee, is a key figure on water issues in the drought-ravaged state. House Speaker [Joe Straus](#), R-San Antonio, has said he is looking to Ritter's leadership on water.

Of the several water bills and proposals from state leaders, Ritter's proposed sum is the largest. The money would come from the Rainy Day Fund, which is also known as the Economic Stabilization Fund and is supplied by oil and gas taxes.

"It is vital for the future of Texas that a dedicated source of revenue be established for funding the state water plan," Ritter said in a prepared statement, referring to a plan released this year that lists \$53 billion in desired water-supply projects. "Our economy depends on it, our communities depend on it, and ultimately, our daily lives depend on it."

Ritter's bills include [House Bill 11](#), which would secure \$2 billion from the Rainy Day Fund, and [HB 4](#), which would set up how the Texas Water Development Board utilizes the funds.

State Rep. [Lyle Larson](#), R-San Antonio, has already filed a bill to use \$1 billion from the fund for water projects, and state Sen. [Kel Seliger](#), R-Amarillo, has said he believes that up to \$1.6 billion would be needed. Lt. Gov. [David Dewhurst](#) has proposed using \$1 billion from the fund for water.

Bill Hammond, president of the Texas Association of Business, released a statement in support of Ritter's bills, HB 4 and HB 11.

"Without an adequate water supply, our Texas economy will dry up," he said, adding that Ritter's bills would "put in place a funding mechanism for the statewide water plan," Hammond said.

Along with using funds for infrastructure that expands water supplies, such as desalination plants or pipelines, Ritter's bills would dedicate up to 20 percent of the new fund to projects that emphasize water conservation and reuse.

The Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club issued a statement praising Ritter's plans, in particular HB 4 due to its focus on water conservation.

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