

The Honorable Martha McSally, Chairman
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Water and Power Subcommittee
Legislative Hearing
Wednesday, July 22 at 2:30 PM
Opening Statement

This hearing of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power will come to order.

This marks our first meeting of the Water and Power subcommittee since COVID-19 took hold and with our new socially distanced set up. And while it is crucial that we get back to business, we also need to recognize that, just like the so many areas of our economy, this pandemic is impacting our water sector.

We will hear about some of those impacts at the full committee hearing tomorrow, where I am pleased that there is a witness that will discuss the challenges our water managers are facing.

But today, we are here to receive testimony on five bills pending before the subcommittee, including S.4288, my Water-Energy Technology Demonstration and Deployment Act. This legislation is the result of the information and recommendations we have received from the hearings this Committee has held this Congress as well as continued engagement with water stakeholders in Arizona and across the West.

The Department of Energy is doing a lot of good work on water technologies. At the same time, the Bureau of Reclamation has programs that support deployment of many of these same tools.

Whether it's water reuse, recycling and desalination, better pumps, or some other technology, my bill will help get the advancements and expertise developed by DOE out of the lab and into the hands of water managers where they are needed now.

And doing that is a win all around - it will accelerate commercialization of technology, get a bigger bang for the buck from tax payer dollars being spent by DOE and Reclamation on these solutions, and start producing additional water supplies needed by western communities.

S.4288 also establishes a Western Water Resilience Center at one or more Universities in the west. As the Universities in Arizona have shown, our academic institutions can drive innovation that will not only improve water security, but will also spur greater development of a water technology industry in the U.S., which will create jobs and economic growth for our country.

In addition to S.4288, we will receive testimony on a number of bills that have been introduced by our Democrat colleagues, including Sen. Udall's S. 2718, Sen. Feinstein's S. 3811, Sen. Harris' S. 4188, and Sen. Wyden's S. 4189.

Each of the bills today contain provisions that are important to western water management. But, as we craft and review legislation, we must be careful not to intentionally or unintentionally put up additional regulatory road blocks in front of much needed water storage or other supply projects. While I have serious concerns with language in some of the bills, I believe there are many elements where we can work together to reach bipartisan agreement.

When it comes to water, we need to resist efforts to drag us back into the old conflicts and either-or games, and focus on the solutions this committee has shown can be developed by working constructively across ideological lines.

In addition to the bills we are reviewing today, there are a number of bipartisan bills that have already received committee consideration and are awaiting further action. This includes S. 2044 – the bill I introduced with Sen. Sinema to address aging water infrastructure – and S. 1932 that was introduced by Sen. Gardner and cosponsored by Sens. Feinstein, Sinema, Rosen, and myself.

Combined together, the consensus provisions from the bills reviewed and reported by this committee can and should form the basis of a water package that we can move this year.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on the five bills before us today, and working through the remaining issues to enact meaningful water legislation this year.

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