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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

House Water and Power Subcommittee Hearing
on H.R. 4719 and H.R. 5487
Representative Tom McClintock
Opening Statement
June 17, 2010

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TODD YOUNG
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Today we're hearing two bills that both invite the question: what is Congress thinking?

The first bill is HR 5487 that continues to throw millions of dollars – 90 millions of dollars, to be precise -- at 54 Water Resource Research Institutes that have been spending money since the Water Resources Research Act of 1984 was adopted.

Before we throw more taxpayer money at them – bearing in mind that we don't have that money to begin with – we have to borrow it – we wanted to take a look at what we've gotten.

They've studied raising water rates and arrived at the stunning and groundbreaking discovery that if the price goes up, people use less. One conducted a blind taste test of water in the District of Columbia. They discovered it tasted a lot like water. In Kentucky, they used this money to study salamander reproductive potency. Presumably they discovered that salamanders, left to their own devices, tend to make more salamanders.

To those who may argue not all of that was federal money, I would remind them of McClintock's Fifth Law of Political Physics, that all funds are fungible and all of these institutes were receiving this money.

If this isn't enough to raise some eyebrows, I must move on to note that the bill moves these institutes farther from their purported mission: to produce more water resources – to what it euphemistically calls non-structural measures. Translated from bureaucratese, that means the development of more wetlands – a previous generation called them swamps – and associated farmland retirement at a time when we need more food production not less.

Many of us on the minority side believe that this Congress has already done enough to make farmers an endangered species; I ask why we need to use federal dollars to hunt farmers to the brink of extinction.

Next, I should note that this program requires matching state dollars. Before we reauthorize it, I would like to find out why this requirement has not been enforced. Available

USGS information suggests that several of these institutes have failed to follow matching requirements, and have in effect, taken the money and run.

Which all would suggest the need for more oversight and not less. Under current law, the USGS is required to submit a program report to Congress over how this program has spent our money every three years. The USGS has yet to submit that report. And yet, it is proposed not only that we further fund it without knowing how this money has been spent – the bill also reduces oversight further by subjecting the spending to review only once every five years. So instead of not getting a report every three years under this bill we won't get a report every five years.

Moving along...

The other bill raises one question regarding water supplies along the Mexican border while ignoring a more important one. I refer to HR 4719 that seeks to create a permanent governmental entity aimed at providing more funding and water to the border region, although \$1.4 billion federal dollars have already been spent for this purpose from 2000 to 2008.

We will hear testimony later today which questions why this bill is not focused instead on protecting the infrastructure that currently provides water. We will hear that the Rio Grande River has become notorious for illegal crossings of persons and drugs and of a recently thwarted plot by the Zeta Drug Cartel to blow up the Falcon Dam.

We have a picture of drug smugglers swimming across the Rio Grande that puts the issue in perspective. The open nature of the border has serious consequences not only on our water supplies but this nation as a whole. This Congress needs to step up and secure our borders to stop the violence and protect our infrastructure and I hope that the focus of this bill can be altered to perform the core purpose of this national government: to protect the integrity of its own borders.