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Symposium Opening Remarks

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SENATOR JEFF BINGAMAN*

Symposium: Opening Remarks**

Good morning. Thank you for inviting me to make some introductory comments at this symposium today on the important topic of the connection between energy and water. First, I want to congratulate you on the fiftieth anniversary of the *Natural Resources Journal*. The NRJ has made important contributions to legal research regarding many of the complex resource-related challenges that we face today.

This symposium, on the water-energy conundrum, highlights an example of one of those challenges. Although the relationship between energy and water has often been overlooked, awareness of the significant amounts of water that are consumed in energy production is increasing. Similarly, it is also becoming well known that acquiring, treating, and delivering water requires significant amounts of energy and this connection is especially important here in New Mexico and elsewhere in the arid Southwest.

Before going into a little detail about the energy and water issues, I would like to briefly address another timely issue that is very important within our Energy and Natural Resources Committee here in the Senate. Last spring, President Obama signed the SECURE Water Act into law.¹ The SECURE Water Act is designed to address many of the water-related challenges that we face today by emphasizing the need for solid data to base decisions on. The Act also encourages collaboration among federal agencies and state and local communities to improve water management and climate change adaptation strategies. The administration's new budget, the fiscal year 2011 budget request, includes funding for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the U.S. Geological Survey to implement the SECURE Water Act. We are encouraged that the administration has given priority to this issue and we look forward to working with them to ensure that the program benefits will be seen by all New Mexicans.

Developing new policies that integrate energy and water solutions will become increasingly vital as populations grow, as environmental needs increase, and as a changing climate continues to affect our energy

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** Opening Remarks at the *Natural Resources Journal* “The Water-Energy Conundrum: Water Constraints on New Energy Development in the Southwest” Symposium, University of New Mexico School of Law (Feb. 12, 2010) (DVD recording on file with the *Natural Resources Journal*) (slight editorial changes were made by Senator Bingaman's office on Apr. 19, 2010).

1. The Science and Engineering to Comprehensively Understand & Responsibly Enhance Water Act, Pub. L. 111-11, § 9501, 123 Stat. 991, 997 (codified at 42 U.S.C. § 13061 (2006)).

and water resources. I am pleased that we are beginning to think about the water and energy needs associated with our current technologies. In addition, as we transition to new sustainable energy sources and develop new reliable water resources, we have an opportunity to incorporate our understanding of the relationship between the two resources into our decisions. There are many opportunities to conserve water and reduce energy use if we devote more attention to the subject.

Earlier this Congress, I introduced the Energy and Water Integration Act² with Senator Murkowski from Alaska. This Act would improve our understanding of the interdependence of energy and water. After receiving testimony and comments on the bill, we included it in the bipartisan energy bill that has been reported out of our committee and is currently awaiting action in the full Senate. We hope that the Senate will take this up and pass this as part of the America Clean Energy Leadership Act³ in the near future.

Although you will hear more detail regarding the Energy and Water Integration Act later during the symposium, let me just highlight a few provisions. The Act calls for a National Academy of Sciences study of the water use associated with fuels and electricity generation. The Act also directs the U.S. Department of Energy, in consultation with other agencies, to conduct a comprehensive water use and energy savings study to identify the best available technologies to maximize water and energy efficiency. The Act also directs the Bureau of Reclamation to evaluate the energy use involved in storing and delivering water from Reclamation projects and to identify ways to reduce energy consumption. Reclamation's brackish groundwater desalination facility in Alamogordo will play an important role in developing new energy-efficient desalination technologies and making other advancements in this area. Additional provisions in the Act include the establishment of an energy-water clean technology grant program to encourage the development of technologies that will reduce energy and water consumption, a technical assistance program for rural water utilities, and a study that emphasizes the embedded energy associated with the procurement, transport, and treatment of water supplies and wastewater that serve industrial, commercial, and residential uses.

I have also introduced S. 1639,⁴ which is a bill to expand tax credits to companies that develop products to promote energy and water effi-

2. Energy and Water Integration Act, S. 531, 111th Cong. (2009).

3. S. 1462, 111th Cong. (2009).

4. Expanding Industrial Energy Efficiency Incentives Act of 2009, S. 1639, 111th Cong. (2009).

ciency, and hope that this will be successfully enacted in connection with other tax legislation later this year.

Again, thank you to the law school and the *Natural Resources Journal* for putting this symposium together and for inviting me to make these introductory comments. Gaining a better understanding of the connection between energy and water is very important and will contribute to more sustainable communities for years to come.

