

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
OF THE  
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE OPERATIONS AND ELECTIONS**

**Eighty-Second Session  
April 27, 2023**

The Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections was called to order by Chair Michelle Gorelow at 3:58 p.m. on Thursday, April 27, 2023, in Room 3142 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4401 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. Copies of the minutes, including the Agenda [[Exhibit A](#)], the Attendance Roster [[Exhibit B](#)], and other substantive exhibits, are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau and on the Nevada Legislature's website at [www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/82nd2023](http://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/82nd2023).

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Assemblywoman Michelle Gorelow, Chair  
Assemblywoman Brittney Miller, Vice Chair  
Assemblyman Rich DeLong  
Assemblywoman Jill Dickman  
Assemblyman Reuben D'Silva  
Assemblywoman Cecelia González  
Assemblyman Brian Hibbetts  
Assemblyman Richard McArthur  
Assemblywoman Daniele Monroe-Moreno  
Assemblywoman Sabra Newby  
Assemblyman Steve Yeager

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Assemblyman Cameron (C.H.) Miller (excused)

**GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:**

None

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Haley Proehl, Committee Policy Analyst  
Shuruk Ismail, Committee Manager  
Kristi Howard, Committee Secretary  
Garrett Kingen, Committee Assistant



**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Andrew Belanger, Director, Public Services, Southern Nevada Water Authority

Dylan Keith, Assistant Director, Government Affairs, Vegas Chamber

Isaac Hardy, representing Nevada Water Conservation League

Mathilda Guerrero, Digital Manager, Battle Born Progress

**Chair Gorelow:**

[Roll was called. Procedures and protocol were reviewed.] On our agenda today is Senate Joint Resolution 3, which urges the United States Bureau of Reclamation to consider certain action alternatives and measures for the protection and management of the Colorado River. We welcome the Southern Nevada Water Authority here today to present.

**Senate Joint Resolution 3: Urges the United States Bureau of Reclamation to consider certain actions, alternatives and measures for the protection and management of the Colorado River. (BDR R-349)**

**Andrew Belanger, Director, Public Services, Southern Nevada Water Authority:**

Senate Joint Resolution 3 came out of the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Natural Resources, and I was asked to present it, given its topic. The resolution outlines the situation on the Colorado River and a lot of the actions that have taken place over the last year as we deal with a crippling, nearly 25-year drought on the Colorado River and very low reservoir levels at Lake Mead. We have done a number of things to prepare our community for that, including the construction of a third intake and a low lake pumping station that allows us to pull water out of the lake even at very, very low lake levels. We have also developed unprecedented water conservation efforts in southern Nevada that have helped secure our water supply and helped our community prepare for a future that is going to be drier and warmer than any of us would like.

This resolution urges the United States Bureau of Reclamation to do a number of things, including urging them to support the pursuit of a collaboration-based framework to address the structural deficit on the Colorado River, to include mechanisms to account for evaporation and system losses in the river, and also urges them to amend existing federal regulations to prohibit the inefficient delivery, application, or use of any water from the Colorado River by all sectors and users.

We are in a situation on the river where every state and every sector need to do their part. This resolution is designed to ensure that Nevada's position, which has been a unified position of the Southern Nevada Water Authority and the Colorado River Commission of Nevada, be heard loud and clear throughout the West and in the halls of the federal government: we all need to conserve more, and that we all need to do our part.

You can see, in the proposed amendment [[Exhibit C](#)] that we have provided, it strikes the language related to the Consensus-Based Modeling Alternative submitted by Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming from page 3 of the bill, lines 30 to 35.

The reason for that is that a new supplemental environmental impact statement was released a couple of weeks ago. So that issue is now moot. With that, I am happy to answer any questions that you might have. I appreciate the Committee's consideration of this resolution.

**Chair Gorelow:**

Committee members, do we have any questions?

**Assemblyman Yeager:**

I know that you said you would be proposing to strike out the language that talks about the other states, but I just wondered if you know if any of the other Colorado River Compact states have urged Congress to do this as well? Are we going to be the first one to break some ground with a resolution like this?

**Andrew Belanger:**

I am not aware of any other state having submitted a resolution on this. I do know that Nevada, along with the other five states that signed on to that Consensus-Based Modeling Alternative, is looking for the federal government to really consider some approaches that look at evaporation, look at other system losses, and try to acknowledge the reality of the situation.

**Assemblyman Yeager:**

Those of us up here in northern Nevada have experienced quite a bit of snow. I know other places have too. Obviously, it is going to help Lake Tahoe up in this area, but from your vantage point on the rest of the Colorado River, will last winter help? I remember seeing some photos recently of the Grand Canyon and there was still a lot of snow. Some parts of the basin in the Grand Canyon are actually unpassable because of the water flow right now. I just wanted to get your take on whether that is going to help. Is that a little bit of help, or is it a lot of help? What does it mean for us here in Nevada and particularly in southern Nevada?

**Andrew Belanger:**

We appreciate this year's snowpack and runoff. We hope for a cool, dry, spring that is not windy because that will help most of that water get into the basin. We expect to see the water level rise in Lake Mead this year, and that is a positive sign. We are grateful for the weather we have had and its impact. It is a good one-year reprieve, and we hope to have many more of those that would help us. Obviously, we have to prepare for the worst case. We will take all of the good years that we can get.

**Assemblyman Hibbetts:**

Out of curiosity, if you know, how many years of above-average snowpack in the western Rockies it would take to bring Lake Mead specifically back up to a normal or average level?

**Andrew Belanger:**

I do not know that off the top of my head. What I will say is that over the last 23 years, only 6 have been above average. Of those six years, about half of them were right at the average. As you know, it has taken us a lot of years to get into this situation, and it will take us a decade or two to get out of it.

**Chair Gorelow:**

That was actually my question as I was curious about that as well. Committee members, are there any other questions? Seeing none, we will open up testimony in support.

**Dylan Keith, Assistant Director, Government Affairs, Vegas Chamber:**

As we know, the availability and sustainability of water resources are essential to the seven states along the Colorado River and Mexico. The ongoing drought within the Colorado River basin and the impact on Lake Mead are of the greatest concern to the region's economic stability and the two million residents in southern Nevada. The Vegas Chamber has been a longtime advocate for the federal government to work with Nevada's congressional delegation, the other states, and Mexico to effectively address the concerns along the Colorado River. It has been one of our top federal priorities for many years. We appreciate the ongoing work that has been done by our congressional delegation and many of our state legislators to help move this conversation forward with the federal government and our neighboring states. Thank you for your consideration in supporting S.J.R. 3.

**Isaac Hardy, representing Nevada Water Conservation League:**

With the Colorado River at a historic and dangerously low level, we need robust and comprehensive water conservation solutions. The Consensus-Based Modeling Alternative would help stabilize the water levels of Lake Mead and Lake Powell and encourage all states that depend on the Colorado River to work together to reduce water use. We urge the Committee's support.

**Chair Gorelow:**

Is there anyone else in Carson City who would like to come to the table to testify in support? Seeing no one, we will go to Las Vegas. I do not see anyone there in support, so we will move to callers in support of S.J.R. 3.

**Mathilda Guerrero, Digital Manager, Battle Born Progress:**

My name is Mathilda Guerrero and on behalf of Battle Born Progress, we are in support of this measure. I agree with the sentiments of my colleagues. It is time for other states to go with the flow and do their part to conserve the Colorado River. It is also time for this body to channel our efforts towards a comprehensive water conservation solution.

**Chair Gorelow:**

Since there are no other callers in support, we will close testimony in support and come back to Carson City for testimony in opposition. [There was none.] We will move to Las Vegas for testimony in opposition to S.J.R. 3. [There was none.] Are there any callers in opposition? [There were none.]

We will open up the testimony in neutral. Is there anyone in Carson City who would like to come to the table to testify in neutral? [There was no one.] Is there anyone in Las Vegas who would like to testify in neutral? [There was no one.] Are there callers who would like to testify in neutral on S.J.R. 3? [There were none.]

Are there any further remarks from the Committee or Mr. Belanger on S.J.R. 3? [There were none.] We will close the hearing on S.J.R. 3 and move on to the next item on our agenda, which is public comment. [There was no public comment.]

The next meeting of this Committee will be Tuesday, May 2, 2023. With that we are adjourned [at 4:11 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

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Kristi Howard  
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

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Assemblywoman Michelle Gorelow, Chair

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

## **EXHIBITS**

[Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda.

[Exhibit B](#) is the Attendance Roster.

[Exhibit C](#) is a proposed amendment to [Senate Joint Resolution 3](#), presented by Andrew Belanger, Director, Public Services, Southern Nevada Water Authority.