

Justin S. Greene
Commissioner, District 1

Lisa Cacari Stone
Commissioner, District 2

Camilla Bustamante
Commissioner, District 3



Adam Fulton Johnson
Commissioner, District 4

Hank Hughes
Commissioner, District 5

Gregory S. Shaffer
County Manager

September 18, 2026

Hon. Harriet Hageman, Chair
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries
House Committee on Natural Resources
1227 Longworth House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515

Hon. Val Hoyle, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries
House Committee on Natural Resources
1620 Longworth House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: H.R.6869- To amend the Aamodt Litigation Settlement Act to modify a provision relating to the extension of certain dates for the completion of the Pojoaque Basin Regional Water System, and for other purposes

Dear Representative Hageman and Representative Hoyle:

The County of Santa Fe, New Mexico, one of the five New Mexico entities that will benefit from, own and operate the Pojoaque Basin Regional Water System ("Regional Water System"), the centerpiece of the settlement of the long-running *Aamodt* litigation, writes this letter to advise you of our very strong support for H.R.6869, a bill introduced by Representative Teresa Leger Fernandez. H.R. 6869 would amend the *Aamodt* Settlement Act., Pub. L. No. 111-291, so as to remove from that Act language that the Department of the Interior ("Interior") has interpreted as requiring construction of the Regional Water System to stop on June 30, 2028. We urge that your Committee act favorably on the bill when it is heard.

Construction of the Regional Water System is proceeding well. Yet cost increases and funding remain a challenge. We have been working with the Bureau of Reclamation ("Reclamation") to address cost and funding issues, in an effort to continue to construct, and complete the Project in the most efficient and beneficial manner that ensures the benefits of the settlement and *Aamodt* Settlement Act come to fruition. A key element of that effort has been a restructuring of the construction contracting schedule, which will more rapidly and economically enable the system to become operational and to begin to serve customers and generate revenues, with additional distribution lines (and related features such as tanks) added as funding allows. We believe this is the best approach now, given the uncertainty of obtaining additional funding, and we strongly support this new strategy.

Developing and implementing this new strategy, however, meant redesigning aspects of the

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system, and engaging in a revised contracting plan, all of which have resulted in Reclamation's timeline for system completion to extend into 2030. We fully support that schedule, and, as we noted above, believe that the current strategy being followed by Reclamation represents the most feasible route for bringing the system into operation at the earliest possible time.

One problem stands in the way of Reclamation's current approach. The issue arises from Section 623(e) of the Settlement Act, as amended in 2021. That section provides for a procedure by which, if the Secretary of the Interior, in response to a request by one or more Pueblos, were to determine that the system could not be substantially completed by June 30, 2028, the Pueblo or Pueblos could petition the decree court to void the settlement. We consider this to be a nonsensical proposition, as none of the Pueblos wants construction to cease as long as funding is available. However, because the provision and the 2028 date remain in the Settlement Act, Interior considers June 30, 2028, to be a cutoff for construction activity on the Regional Water System, irrespective of whether funding remains. Thus, Reclamation does not believe it can legally consider proposals for design changes that, even though they might save money and more efficiently complete the Project, would delay "substantial completion" beyond the 2028 date.

H.R.6869 would amend the Act to enable us to remove this obstacle to ensuring the completion of a functional system, by enabling us to agree (with the concurrence of the State and the City of Santa Fe, who have assured us that they fully agree with the aim of this bill) to extend the dates in that section. The Pueblos and the County are fully committed to working cooperatively with Reclamation to complete the Regional Water System to fulfill the intent and purposes of the *Aamodt* Settlement Act. Full implementation of the settlement through functional construction of the centerpiece - the Regional Water System - is essential to this purpose, and passage of H.R.6869 will allow us to eliminate a pointless and unnecessary obstacle to the achievement of that goal.

We have greatly appreciated the Committee's support for the *Aamodt* settlement in the past, and hope that we can have its support for this technical amendment, which involves no cost to the United States, in order to assure that construction of the Regional Water System will continue in accordance with the current plan.

Sincerely,



Justin S. Greene (Sep 17, 2026 14:20:19 MDT)

Justin S. Greene, Chair
Board of County Commissioners

H.R. 6869 Santa Fe County Letter of Support.Chair Greene

Final Audit Report

2026-09-17

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