

North Texas e-News

OP-ED: THE FUTURE OF WATER IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

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March 13, 2023

The 88th Legislature is blessed with a once-in-a-generation budget surplus, totaling nearly \$33 billion, and the opportunity to make historic and strategic investments for Texas' long-term growth. The fierce competition for those resources has commenced under the dome in Austin and as legislators balance the many needs of the state, they must not lose sight of the foundation for human life, public health, and the "Texas Miracle" – water.

A state without an adequate water supply is a state in crisis; it's almost impossible to have a competitive economy. That's why future water supply is a priority for the [Texas Business Leadership Council \(TBLC\)](#).

Over the last year, Texas has endured the worst dry spell since the historic drought of 2011. The one thing different, though, is the approximately 4.5M new Texans turning on the taps this year versus 2011. More than 1,000 people are moving to Texas each day, and have been for decades, but they are not bringing water with them. The ongoing drought mixed with population growth and periodic flooding illustrates the importance of water capture, planning, and investment.

As a member of the Texas Water Supply Partners, [TBLC](#) has rolled up its sleeves to make sure water policy remains a priority for the Legislature. Texas Water Supply Partners is a group of like-minded entities who share a commitment to advancing state policy related to the development of water supplies throughout Texas, including the implementation of the State Water Plan. Both TBLC and Texas Water Supply Partners recognize that water is critically important to maintaining and growing Texas' vibrant economy.

As they begin their work dividing up the revenue, including the \$33 billion surplus, legislators should continue building on their history of having a long-term vision for our most precious resource – water. With over \$80 billion in water-related needs, TBLC fully supports investing a sizable portion of our surplus on water related support and infrastructure – not only for new supply like the building of reservoirs, but also to repair and replace aging critical infrastructure like pipelines and dams. Further, several state agencies need additional support to carry out their

expanded missions regarding water policy. For one, the Texas Water Development Board has experienced significant growth in their roles and responsibilities to the people of Texas. Finally, considering the enormity and diversity of Texas – coupled with the growing needs for water and the difficulty and expense of implementing large solutions – it is imperative that Texas continues to support regional partnerships for water projects.

Texas is blessed with a vibrant and growing economy – in part because of an adequate water supply. The water supply we enjoy today is the result of hard work from many state and local leaders from years past. The Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the House have demonstrated a commitment to water in the 88th Legislature as evidenced by their respective appointments of seasoned, respected members of the Legislature with expertise in water policy to the Senate Water, Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee and the House Natural Resources Committee.

If Texas is to continue to enjoy economic prosperity, legislators must invest in water this session, while we have the surplus. Clean, affordable, and reliable supplies of water are essential to public health, quality of life, and the vibrant economy we enjoy today. The stakes are too great, if the state's water needs are not met. The 88th Legislature must invest in water for the future of Texas.

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