



North Dakota Irrigation Association

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Dedicated to strengthening and expanding irrigation to build and diversify our economy

**House Agriculture Committee
Hearing for HB 1531
January 30, 2025
Testimony of Steve Hansen, Chairman, ND Irrigation Association**

Chairman Beltz and Members of the Committee, my name is Steve Hansen, and I serve as Chairman of the North Dakota Irrigation Association (NDIA) in addition to being a farmer and irrigator from Ludden, ND, in Dickey County. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of House Bill 1531.

HB 1531 would provide an appropriation to the Ag Commissioner to support an economic study looking at the impact that irrigation and drainage practices can have on agricultural productivity and in turn on state and local economies. As an irrigator who also uses tile drainage, I can tell you that implementing these practices on my farm has had a significant economic impact when it comes to productivity. However, as Chairman of the Irrigation Association, I can't tell you what the impact of those practices are on my local area or on the state as a whole. Having that information would be helpful as we look at future development of these practices and state investment in that development.

One of the questions specifically called out in this bill that I am especially excited to get an answer on is this:

What is the lost economic activity incurred by the state of North Dakota due to the federal government not building out irrigation infrastructure as promised through the Pick Sloan plan?

When the Garrison and Oahe dams were built by the federal government, 584,000 acres in North Dakota were inundated. In exchange for the loss of that land, the federal government promised to develop more than 1 million acres of irrigation throughout the state. Due to changes in federal government policy shortly after the dams were completed, that development was in large part unrealized. Over the last few decades, the state and the federal government have negotiated alternative compensation for the state. Having a number what the state has lost because of the loss of land and lack of irrigation development would be very beneficial as we advocate for federal funding in DC.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony, Mr. Chairman. I'd be happy to stand for any questions you may have.