



North Dakota Irrigation Association

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

Senate Appropriations Committee Government Operations Division
Senate Bill 2020
Testimony of Dani Quissell, Executive Director of North Dakota Irrigation Association
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Chairman Wanzek and Members of the Senate Appropriations Government Operations Division:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony on Senate Bill 2020.

Today, North Dakota irrigates about 300,000 acres to produce a variety of crops including corn and soybeans, livestock forage, and high value crops such as potatoes, sugar beets, and onions. Irrigation provides strong economic return, with an acre of irrigated land producing four times that of dryland in regular conditions and as much as six times in times of drought.

Irrigation provides the opportunity to grow higher value crops where top yields and exceptional quality are necessary. High quality coupled with substantial yielding potatoes have made the French fry industry, located in Grand Forks and Jamestown, successful in the state. The acreage of onions in the state is smaller than the other crops, but this crop may have an important role in the future as markets are developed. Other fruit and vegetable crops can be produced and processed in the state and the development of the markets for these crops is needed. Irrigation does and can diversify and strengthen the agricultural economy of the state.

North Dakota has a substantial potential of increasing irrigation. A key part of irrigation development is continued research on irrigation practices and irrigated crops. This is especially effective when the research is done at centers close to producers that could benefit from their research.

The State Board of Agricultural Research and Education (SBARE) priorities included in SB 2020 contain a request for capital project improvements for the Nesson Valley Irrigation site near Williston. We would request that the division consider not just the dollar amount contained in the SBARE priorities, but the full amount needed to provide for the space requested in the 2023 session. Unfortunately, bids for the full building were higher than the amount approved in the 2023 session. Instead of scaling the building down, we would request that additional funding be provided for the building requested in 2023. This facility would support ongoing educational efforts for irrigators as well as meetings to support expansion of irrigation in western North Dakota.

Thank you for your past support of irrigation research and for your consideration of this request.