



**Testimony on APRA Funding for the Red River Valley Water Supply Project
Presented to the House Appropriations Committee
Prepared by Bernie Dardis, West Fargo City Commission President
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1 Chairman Delzer and members of the House Appropriations Committee, thank you
2 for opportunity to testify in support of ARPA funding for the Red River Valley Water
3 Supply Project, specifically, in support of the recently amended Senate version to
4 designate \$75 million for water infrastructure and to study a stabilization fund.

5 My name is Bernie Dardis, and I am the President of the West Fargo City
6 Commission. The recent census showed the City of West Fargo grew by nearly 50% over
7 the last decade and that is why, as a participant in the Red River Valley Water Supply
8 Project, it is critical that we invest as a state in this Project to ensure the long-term
9 economic vitality and resiliency of our growing and vibrant community in West Fargo.

10 During this year's drought, West Fargo issued water restrictions similar to those
11 implemented by cities across North Dakota. We are part of a regionalized water system
12 that draws from the Red and Sheyenne Rivers. The Sheyenne River, which runs through
13 West Fargo, was alarmingly low during the peak of this year's extremely dry weather.

14 As one of the largest cities in North Dakota with close to 40,000 residents and the
15 second largest school district in the state, we cannot rely upon water restrictions to
16 ensure our residents have enough water.

17 In order for our community and the State to thrive, we need access to a
18 supplemental water supply to attract and retain more industries. Cargill is one of the
19 largest water users in West Fargo. Between the plants in West Fargo and Wahpeton,
20 Cargill employs more than 230 people in the State. The plants represent an investment
21 of more than \$260 million. If we are to continue to draw new industry to North Dakota,
22 West Fargo and the other cities involved in the Red River Valley Water Supply we need
23 the supplemental water supply provided by the project. It is crucial for North Dakota's
24 economic diversification.

25 As a Killdeer boy, I understand the discussion that goes on about the needs of the
26 east and those of the west in our State. Together though, we share in the opportunity
27 made possible by access to one of our greatest natural resource, the Missouri River,
28 which already supplies water through the successful Southwest Pipeline Project, the
29 Western Area Water Supply, and now possible through the Northwest Area Water
30 Supply. The Red River Valley Water Supply Project is an opportunity for the State to
31 complete the vision put forward by its newly created Department of Water Resources,
32 which says, "Missouri River water will be put to beneficial use through its distribution
33 across the state to meet the ever-increasing water supply and quality needs."

34 The Red River Valley Water Supply Project is not a project for one city; it is a
35 transformational project for the State that will benefit nearly half the population of North
36 Dakota when complete. In July, construction crews began work on the buried pipeline
37 that will deliver Missouri River water to large and small communities and rural water
38 systems from central North Dakota all the way to the Red River Valley. The Project will
39 not just provide an emergency water supply during moderate to severe droughts, it will



40 also serve as a catalyst for half the state to have access to a supplemental water
41 supply that will yield economic development opportunities to all the Project's
42 participants for which the entire State will see benefit.

43 With \$200 million of shovel-ready construction ready to proceed, the Red River
44 Valley Water Supply Project is asking for \$50 million in ARPA funding be put toward
45 accelerating construction so that Grand Forks, Valley City, Fargo, West Fargo, and all
46 the rural water systems can realize the benefits sooner. There are specialized
47 construction crews already in place working on the pipeline right now as I provide this
48 testimony.

49 As we learned from the drought this year, now is not the time to be putting
50 money in the bank for a rainy day because those have been too few and far between
51 lately. Putting \$50 million in ARPA funds toward this Project will provide for an immediate
52 return on investment and should be utilized to make the Project more affordable for not
53 just the State, but for all the community partners involved.

54 Thank you, Chairman Delzer and members of the House Appropriations
55 Committee, for your time and consideration of the needs of my community of West
56 Fargo.