

One Hundred Fifth Legislature - First Session - 2017

Introducer's Statement of Intent

LB488

Chairperson: Senator Dan Hughes

Committee: Natural Resources

Date of Hearing: February 15, 2017

The following constitutes the reasons for this bill and the purposes which are sought to be accomplished thereby:

In 1943, the States of Kansas, Colorado, and Nebraska entered into an interstate compact addressing allowable surface water usage in the Republican River basin as allocated between the three states. In 2005 and 2012 litigation ensued alleging overuse by Nebraska that had to be addressed. In order to augment the water supply, the interlocal entity N-CORPE was formed and in mid December 2012 purchased 19,514 acres in Lincoln County and started a water augmentation project. This water augmentation project continues to deplete ground water resources without a clear exit strategy. LB 488 is the first step towards that exit strategy by encouraging water conservation and addressing overuse of resources.

This bill creates the Water Conservation Grant act, funded by a \$3 million transfer from the Water Sustainability Fund and administered by the Department of Natural Resources. Under this grant program, anybody owning certified irrigated acres that have been (1) irrigated within 2 years (2) within 5 miles of a river or its tributaries (3) subject to a multi-state compact and, (4) which acres are not already subject to an agreement not to irrigate, can apply to the Department for a grant. The approved grant amount equals \$50 times the amount of eligible acres. The grantees will not be subject to the occupation tax on irrigation acres during the eligibility period. The grant program is capped at \$3 million annually and upon receipt of the applications, the department would prioritize the applications with first approval going to the eligible acres closest to the river or tributary. LB 488 further directs the Department to adopt and promulgate rules to administer this water conservation program.

Principal Introducer: _____

Senator Mike Groene