



**Testimony on APRA Funding for the Red River Valley Water Supply Project
Presented to the Senate Appropriations Committee
Prepared by Bernie Dardis, West Fargo City Commission President
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1 Chairman Holmberg and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee, thank
2 you for opportunity to testify in support of ARPA funding for the Red River Valley Water
3 Supply Project. My name is Bernie Dardis, and I am the President of the West Fargo City
4 Commission. The recent census showed the City of West Fargo grew by nearly 50% over
5 the last decade and that is why, as a participant in the Red River Valley Water Supply
6 Project, it is critical that we invest as a state in this Project to ensure the long-term
7 economic vitality and resiliency of our growing and vibrant community in West Fargo.

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

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

15 In order for our community and the State to thrive, we need access to a
16 supplemental water supply to attract and retain more industries. Cargill is one of the
17 largest water users in West Fargo. Between the plants in West Fargo and Wahpeton,

18 Cargill employs more than 230 people in the State. The plants represent an investment
19 of more than \$260 million. If we are to continue to draw new industry to North Dakota,
20 West Fargo and the other cities involved in the Red River Valley Water Supply we need
21 the supplemental water supply provided by the project. It is crucial for North Dakota's
22 economic diversification.

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

32 The Red River Valley Water Supply Project is not a project for one city; it is a
33 transformational project for the State that will benefit nearly half the population of North
34 Dakota when complete. In July, construction crews began work on the buried pipeline
35 that will deliver Missouri River water to large and small communities and rural water
36 systems from central North Dakota all the way to the Red River Valley. The Project will
37 not just provide an emergency water supply during moderate to severe droughts, it will
38 also serve as a catalyst for half the state to have access to a supplemental water
39 supply that will yield economic development opportunities to all the Project's
40 participants for which the entire State will see benefit.



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

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

52 Thank you, Chairman Holmberg and members of the Senate Appropriations
53 Committee, for your time and consideration of the needs of my community of West
54 Fargo.