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## **Committee Chairs to Hold Press Conference on Water Legislation**

When: Tuesday, February 12, 2013 – 10 AM

Where: Senate Finance Committee, Capitol Room 322

SANTA FE – The Chair of Senate Conservation Committee and the Chair of Senate Finance Committee will talk about water issues and current related legislation during a Tuesday morning press conference.

Water comes to the forefront this legislative session as dry conditions continue to plague the state. Drought is sounding an especially critical alarm this session in the wake of the binding requirements of the 2010 Aamodt lawsuit settlement as well as a recent lawsuit filed against New Mexico by the State of Texas.

Senate Conservation Committee Chairman Peter Wirth (D, Santa Fe, Dist. 25) said, “Water is the most important issue we have to talk more about. The water challenges facing New Mexico cannot be understated.”

Multiple bills were recently introduced by Senate Conservation Committee Chairman Peter Wirth, Senate Finance Committee Chairman John Arthur Smith (D, Dona Ana, Hidalgo, Luna, Sierra, Dist. 35), Senator Joseph Cervantes (D, Dona Ana, Dist. 31), Senate Majority Leader Michael Sanchez (D, Valencia, Bernalillo, Dist 29), and Senator Steven Neville (R, San Juan, Dist. 2).

“The bottom line is that of all the issues before the Legislature, none are more important than water,” Senator Smith said. “In determining the future of the state, not only short term, but long term, it is critical that the Legislature and the executive step up to the plate.”

“Water shortages now threaten every other initiative related to our state economy and jobs,” Senator Cervantes said. “It jeopardizes the future of agriculture in our state. The Legislature intends to take the lead with solutions and assure the long-term lifeblood of our desert state.”

The bills introduced in the Senate are:

- Senate Bill 466 – Water Court Judgeships, sponsored by Senator Steven Neville
- Senate Bill 479 & 480 - Closing domestic-well loopholes, sponsored by Senator Peter Wirth and Senate Majority Floor Leader Michael Sanchez
- Senate Bill 481 – Funding for regional water planning, sponsored by Senator John Arthur Smith
- Senate Bill 482 – Water supply and demand study, sponsored by Senator Peter Wirth
- Senate Bill 494 – AWRM clarification, sponsored by Senator Joseph Cervantes
- Senate Bill 440 – Lower Rio Grande Water Rights appropriation sponsored by Senator Joseph Cervantes