

TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



Terry Canales District 40

House Committee on Transportation, Chair • House Committee on Homeland Security & Public Safety

March 27, 2024

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor of Texas
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Governor Abbott,

I am writing to urgently request your assistance in addressing the critical water challenges currently faced by the Lower Rio Grande Valley, specifically concerning the imminent threat to our residents and our farmers. The situation has reached a point of crisis, and I believe a declaration of emergency is essential to mobilize the necessary resources and support for our community. Under the authority vested in your office by Section 418.014 of the Texas Government Code, please declare a state of disaster in our region and, pursuant to 418.017, authorize the use of all available resources of state government that are reasonably necessary to deal with this disaster.

As you are aware, Lower Rio Grande Valley farmers are running out of vital irrigation water. Compounding this issue is the alarming delay by Mexico in fulfilling its obligations under the 1944 Water Treaty, exacerbating the water shortage for our local farmers. We must find a means of applying pressure on Mexico to comply with the treaty and release the water owed to the United States. I kindly request your assistance in urging the United States State Department to enforce the treaty and ensure that Mexico fulfills its obligations promptly.

The consequences of the water scarcity in our region are already devastating. The recent closure of the only operating sugar mill in Texas after more than 50 years in business is a clear indication of the economic impact on our community. This closure has resulted in job losses and financial setbacks for our region, with agriculture contributing around \$1 billion annually to our economy and providing approximately 8,400 full-time jobs. We are perilously close to losing a crucial economic pillar, and immediate action is imperative.



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In our fast-growing region, development is beginning to slow due to current water supplies, with numerous communities lacking the water to service new commercial and residential customers. Recently, the city of Mission added an item to its council agenda that could put a moratorium on all new residential and commercial developments over 5 acres. Other communities across our area are facing similar challenges, which greatly endangers future development. If we don't start turning the ship now, the Rio Grande Valley ultimately faces the threat of the taps running dry.

To address the long-term water challenges faced by the Rio Grande Valley, our only path forward is greater collaboration on a regional approach to securing new water sources. This will require concerted efforts and coordination among various stakeholders, and I believe that with your support, we can pave the way for a sustainable and secure water future for our community.

In light of the severity of the situation, I urgently request additional state resources to be allocated to address the immediate water needs of our community. The Lower Rio Grande Valley is in desperate need of assistance to prevent further economic losses and job layoffs. I trust that your swift action on this matter will make a significant difference in preserving the livelihoods of our residents and the economic well-being of our region.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to your prompt response and support in resolving the water crisis facing the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terry Canales", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Terry Canales
State Representative District 40

cc: Maria-Elena Giner, Commissioner of the International Boundary and Water Commission (IWBC)
Brooke Paup, Chairwomen of the Texas Water Development Board

