



## ISSUE BRIEFING

July 2008

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SUBJECT:

### *Twenty-First Century Water Commission*

**BACKGROUND:** Congress has identified that federal water policy is fragmented and often based on incomplete information. H.R. 135 would establish a nine-member panel, known as the 21st Century Water Commission, to assemble the vast amount of relevant water-related data, learn from the successes and failures of current water legislation, and make recommendations for future policy development. The 21st Century Water Commission would provide its information and recommendations to the President and the appropriate House and Senate committees. It is important to recognize that concerns over shrinking water supply always have an impact on the green industry.

**DEVELOPMENTS:** Current bill sponsors represent a broad cross section of Congress both geographically and philosophically. In the 109th Congress, H.R. 135 overwhelmingly passed the House by a 402–22 vote on April 12, 2005. In the 108th Congress, H.R. 135 passed the floor by voice vote. The Bush administration has supported H.R. 135 in the past; in 2005, the Interior Department testified in support of H.R. 135 before the House Resources Subcommittee on Water. Continued concerns about persistent drought and water supply concerns underscore the need for meaningful, forward-thinking water policy solutions. A properly constructed advisory committee is an appropriate forum to tackle future water policy challenges.

Senate Bill 2728, the 21st Century Water Commission, was introduced on March 6, 2008, by Senator Johnny Isakson.

#### **IMPORTANT POINTS:**

The main thrust of H.R. 135 and S. 2728 is to ensure a safe and adequate water supply for the 21st century. In order to accomplish these goals, the 21st Century Water Commission would develop policy recommendations based on comprehensive data and lessons learned from previous water policies. The commission would work in an advisory capacity only and would have no recognized authority other than to make recommendations about water policy.

**REQUESTED ACTION:** Please support H.R. 135 and S. 2728, and please join the House *Congressional Water Caucus, established to promote thoughtful and effective water policy.*