

September 21, 2020

Legislative Committee on Public Lands  
Senator David R. Parks, Chairman  
401 S. Carson Street  
Carson City, Nevada 89701-4747

Re: Opposition to changing the qualifications appurtenant to the position of Nevada  
State Engineer

Dear Senator Parks and Committee Members:

My name is Robert Coache, P.E. and I am a former employee of the Division of Water Resources, Office of the State Engineer from 1981-2010. During this tenure I had the honor of serving from 2006-2010 as the first Deputy State Engineer assigned to the State Engineer's Southern Nevada Branch Office located in Las Vegas.

When I began my employment with the State Engineers Office I had a degree in Hydrology, but I was not a licensed Professional Engineer. After a number of years with the State Engineers office I began to see the value and benefit of being a licensed Professional Engineer and with encouragement from the State Engineer and his Deputies I went to UNLV part time to get the additional background I needed to take and pass the Engineer in Training and Professional Engineers test to obtain my license as a Profession Engineer.

Having seen first hand over the last four decades the breadth of data that must be reviewed and understood by the State Engineer on a regular basis and experienced firsthand, the multiple disciplines that a individual must gain proficiency in to become a Professional Engineer is without question the single best requirement for managing the State of Nevada's water resources.

My personal experience of working a number of years for the State Engineer with only a degree in Hydrology, prior to obtaining my Professional Engineers license resulted in firsthand knowledge of the benefits of being a Professional Engineer with regards to the responsibilities of the State Engineer. This personal experience is the basis of my opposition to the elimination of the Professional Engineer requirement for appointment as the Nevada State Engineer.

While I am unequivocally opposed to the removal of the requirement of being a Professional Engineer as a requirement to be the State Engineer I am also concerned and alarmed with Director Crowell's apparent lack of knowledge and misrepresentations of the history of the State Engineer's Office.

For example in the support statement for the removal of the Professional Engineer requirement, Mr. Crowell states:

“In the modern era of water management, most of the “engineering” elements of the position are now well understood or have been overcome with new technological advancements. In other words, “access” to ground and surface water is no longer the greatest technical hurdle in Nevada, whereas other science and technical specialties, such as hydrology and geology, are now the main technical challenges for responsible water management in Nevada.”

In my experience with the State Engineer’s office and the private sector I can say without hesitation that the “access” to ground and surface water has never been a technical hurdle in the great state of Nevada. Since the creation of the State Engineer’s Office, the use of hydrology and hydrogeology has always been and continues to this day to be a basis for responsible water management in Nevada. In fact the first hydrologic study done by the State Engineer’s Office was started in 1912 which in part led to the recognition of ground water by the 1913 session of the Nevada Legislature.

Since the creation of the State Engineer’s office in 1903 the management of Nevada’s water resources has been multifaceted. While over the years, new techniques have been developed, some viable and some later found to be inaccurate and/or unreliable and the technology used to process the data has become more powerful. The administration, management and resources used to administer Nevada Water Law in accordance with the statutes has remained relatively consistent.

With three decades of actual experience with the Nevada State Engineer’s office I do not share Mr. Crowell’s belief that the requirement of the State Engineer being a Professional Engineer has become “outdated”. In fact it is my belief that the multi disciplinary and problem solving education necessary to obtain licensing as a Professional Engineer has become more relevant today in performing the duties of the Nevada State Engineer, not “outdated” as Mr. Crowell claims.

This Legislative body is urged to not cast aside the tradition and high standards that has served the Nevada State Engineer’s office for well over 100 years. When the State Engineer’s office was created in 1903 the legislature titled the position it created the “State Engineer” for a reason, 117 years later that reason remains valid.

Respectfully submitted,



Robert Coache, P.E.