

State of South Dakota

EIGHTY-NINTH SESSION
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, 2014

525V0507

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 6

Introduced by: Senators Frerichs, Begalka, Bradford, Buhl O'Donnell, Ewing, Jones (Tom), Krebs, Lucas, Maher, Omdahl, Otten (Ernie), Rhoden, Sutton, and Welke and Representatives Gosch, Bartling, Bolin, Craig, Feickert, Feinstein, Gibson, Greenfield, Haggart (Jenna), Heinert, Hoffman, Hunhoff (Bernie), Kirschman, Novstrup (David), Parsley, Peterson, Rounds, Schaefer, Schoenfish, Sly, Soli, Tulson, Tyler, Werner, and Wismer

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION, Expressing the Legislature's support for citizens and
2 communities in eastern South Dakota impacted by severe high water conditions over the last
3 two decades.

4 WHEREAS, during the 1990s, the Waubay Lakes area in northeastern South Dakota
5 experienced unprecedented high water levels, an event that continues to the present day and has
6 caused serious disruption for the people and the economy of the affected area; and

7 WHEREAS, in 1998 the Federal Emergency management Agency (FEMA) declared the
8 Waubay Lakes region a disaster area; and

9 WHEREAS, the Waubay Lakes area includes Pickerel Lake, Enemy Swim Lake,
10 Hildebrands Lake, Spring Lake, Waubay Lake, Minnewasta Lake, Rush Lake, Blue Dog Lake,
11 and Bitter Lake, near the town of Waubay; and

12 WHEREAS, during the extreme high water conditions of the 1990s, which have continued
13 to the present, several of the lakes in the Waubay area coalesced into single, larger bodies of



1 water, with Bitter Lake, the terminal lake in the Waubay lake system, receiving water from the
2 lakes upstream; and

3 WHEREAS, studies at South Dakota State University and related institutions have shown
4 high water periods in the Waubay Lakes area that resemble the current situation on only three
5 other occasions in the last one thousand years. Studies indicate that the Bitter Lake outlet has
6 not been overtopped since the end of the glacial period; and

7 WHEREAS, water levels in this area have fluctuated drastically, with Bitter Lake being dry
8 in 1934 at the height of the Dust Bowl. At this point it is impossible to predict the duration of
9 the high water conditions in the Waubay Lakes area; and

10 WHEREAS, the high water conditions have presented immense difficulties for landowners
11 and agricultural producers, who have had crop and pasture land inundated and out of production
12 for years, while still being on the tax rolls; and

13 WHEREAS, the high water conditions have presented challenges to local governments,
14 affecting county and township roads and local water and sewer systems, as well as other
15 infrastructure; and

16 WHEREAS, the high water conditions have caused serious tensions between various South
17 Dakota citizens and groups over such issues as public access for recreational purposes and the
18 intrusion of members of the public into areas that were previously inaccessible and were part
19 of the producers' agricultural operations; and

20 WHEREAS, finding acceptable solutions to the problems created by high water conditions
21 without adversely impacting people and property in other drainage systems is a difficult
22 challenge; and

23 WHEREAS, several other areas in eastern South Dakota have also been affected by high
24 water conditions during this period and face issues as severe as those in the Waubay Lakes area:

1 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Senate of the Eighty-Ninth Legislature
2 of the State of South Dakota, the House of Representatives concurring therein, that the South
3 Dakota Legislature recognizes the extreme hardship facing the people in the Bitter Lake and
4 Waubay Lakes areas, as well as other parts of the state that are experiencing extended high water
5 conditions; and

6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Legislature supports South Dakota's citizens and
7 communities that have been impacted by extended high water conditions in all efforts to deal
8 with this crisis; and

9 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Legislature recognizes and supports the opportunity
10 for local citizens and producers to make full use of the water resources in the area for irrigation
11 purposes and other potential agricultural and economic pursuits, including the use of new and
12 innovative technologies, practices, and approaches.