

1 HOUSE BILL 507

2 **56TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2023**

3 INTRODUCED BY

4 Jason C. Harper and Crystal R. Diamond

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10 AN ACT

11 RELATING TO COURTS; CREATING A DISTRICT WATER COURT; PROVIDING
12 FOR AN ADDITIONAL JUDGESHIP IN THE THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
13 COURT; MAKING AN APPROPRIATION.

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15 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

16 SECTION 1. Section 34-6-16 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1971,
17 Chapter 52, Section 3, as amended) is amended to read:

18 "34-6-16. JUDGES--THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT.--There
19 shall be [~~nine~~] ten district judges in the thirteenth judicial
20 district."

21 SECTION 2. A new section of Chapter 34, Article 6 NMSA
22 1978 is enacted to read:

23 "[NEW MATERIAL] DISTRICT WATER COURT.--

24 A. The "Sandoval, Valencia and Cibola district
25 water court" is established in the thirteenth judicial

.225030.2

underscored material = new
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1 district.

2 B. The water court shall be a civil court that
3 shall hear all cases relating to water in the judicial district
4 in which the district water court is located, as well as other
5 civil cases. A district water court shall give priority to
6 water cases.

7 C. A district water court judge shall be nominated,
8 appointed and elected in the same manner as other district
9 judges.

10 D. Upon taking office, a district water court judge
11 shall devote substantial time to the study of water law and
12 other water-related subjects, especially as that study relates
13 to the arid western regions of the United States. A district
14 water court judge may confer and consult with other district
15 water court judges about issues of water law.

16 E. A district water court judge shall not permit ex
17 parte communications, but a district water court judge may hold
18 informal discussion and planning sessions that shall be open to
19 all parties, members of the public and government agencies,
20 with advance notice to the public.

21 F. A district water court judge's use of water,
22 ownership of water rights or interest in property shall not
23 require disqualification from water cases pursuant to Article
24 6, Section 18 of the constitution of New Mexico.

25 G. A district water court judge may request a

underscored material = new
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1 special master or a judge appointed by the supreme court to
2 hear particular matters when the district water court judge may
3 be perceived to have a significant conflict of interest."

4 SECTION 3. APPROPRIATION.--Five hundred thousand dollars
5 (\$500,000) is appropriated from the general fund to the
6 thirteenth judicial district court for expenditure in fiscal
7 year 2024 for furniture, supplies, equipment and salaries and
8 benefits for one additional district judge and support staff.
9 Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of
10 fiscal year 2024 shall revert to the general fund.