



**Colorado  
Legislative  
Council  
Staff**

**Bill 3**

**FISCAL NOTE**

**FISCAL IMPACT:** State Local Statutory Public Entity Conditional No Fiscal Impact

**Drafting Number:** LLS 17-0120  
**Prime Sponsor(s):**

**Date:** September 14, 2016  
**Bill Status:** Water Resources Review  
Committee Bill Request  
**Fiscal Analyst:** Clare Pramuk (303-866-2677)

**BILL TOPIC:** UPDATE 1921 IRRIGATION DISTRICT LAW

**Summary of Legislation**

This bill updates the 1921 Irrigation District Act as follows:

- increases the compensation for board members and election judges from \$10 to \$100 per day and allows future increases to be decided in a district election;
- clarifies the definitions of agricultural land and landowner and specifies that the unit of voting power is one acre of land within an existing or proposed new district;
- allows an irrigation district to lease its surplus water for all beneficial uses;
- clarifies how irrigation district assessments are to be collected and held by district treasurers;
- eliminates the bonding requirement for district board members; and
- modernizes election procedures and procedures for selling surplus property.

The bill also increases from \$20,000 to \$500,000, the amount of a contract or an eminent domain proceeding that requires voter ratification in a district election. Beginning July 1, 2022, and each July 1 every five years thereafter, the bill allows the district board to adjust the dollar amounts based on the percentage change over the previous five-year period in the consumer price index for Denver-Boulder-Greeley. Finally, the powers conferred by this bill are cumulative and in addition to all other powers conferred to irrigation districts under state law.

**Background**

Irrigation districts are statutory public entities established by landowners. Colorado has 16 irrigation districts statewide. Irrigation districts own water rights that are diverted from a stream and allocated to landowners in the district based on the number of acres owned. Surplus water may be leased inside or outside the district for domestic, agricultural, power, or mechanical purposes only. Irrigation districts are funded by assessments on landowners and the proceeds from water leases.

**Statutory Public Entity and Local Government Impact**

Because the bill increases the daily compensation rate for irrigation district board members and judges, expenditures for each irrigation district will increase. In turn, because the bill raises the minimum amount required for a contract to require approval through an election, election costs for the district, and workload for any counties that administer district elections, are expected to decline. Finally, because the bill expands the uses for which water can be leased, irrigation districts may be able to increase revenue from those leases due to increased demand.

**Effective Date**

The bill takes effect August 9, 2017, if the General Assembly adjourns on May 10, 2017, as scheduled, and no referendum petition is filed.

**State and Local Government Contacts**

Clerk and Records	Counties	Judicial
Local Affairs	Municipalities	Natural Resources
Secretary of State	Special Districts	