

Vote NO on HB297

Utahns Need Transparency & Public Oversight

HB297 creates a new government agency to advance the \$2.4 billion Lake Powell Pipeline & ignite a water war with six other western states. This new agency would be exempt from Utah conflict of interest open meeting laws to keep its work secretive and sheltered from the public. The fiscal note is \$9.6 million, with a \$600,000 annual appropriation. What controls does the public have for knowing how this money will be spent?

HB297 exempts this new water agency from Utah's conflict of interest provisions and exempts its members from Utah open meeting laws, allowing communications & documents to be kept hidden from the public. The spending of \$9.6 million could be sheltered from public oversight by simply claiming an "administrative proceeding" as per the bill language. Doesn't the public have the right to know how tax dollars are spent?

Although some claim every state in the Colorado River Basin has a similar agency, only California has a water agency on the Colorado River that closes its meetings to the public.

What is HB297?

The new water agency would have new staff and six commissioners that heavily represent the water districts advancing the Lake Powell Pipeline behind closed doors, rather than a majority of Utah taxpayers. Although inexpensive alternatives exist to this costly project, this new water agency can work to advance this Pipeline – Utah's largest new spending proposal of any kind – behind closed doors, without public oversight or transparency, and entirely funded by taxpayers. The populous Wasatch Front and its Colorado River water users would have just one commissioner, while rural areas, comprising less than 5% of Utah's population, form the other four commissioners. The unbalanced nature of this new shadowy agency begs the question: *How much tax dollars will be spent on lobbyists for the Lake Powell Pipeline?*

Amendments Needed to HB297

- Remove conflicts of interest exemption, (Line 1404-06): "...river commissioner *without creating a conflict of interest.*"
- Remove open meetings exemption, (Line 157-160): "...judicial proceeding, *administrative proceedings,* or negotiation..."
- Remove GRAMA exemption, (Line 1337-40): "judicial proceeding, *administrative proceeding,* or negotiation..."
- Add reporting requirements, (Line 1347): *"The authority must prepare and present a detailed report on all expenses incurred from annual appropriations from the general fund and from other sources to the Revenue and Taxation Committee every two years."*

An Amendment on HB 297 is a Commitment to Transparency