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## **Bill Giving the State Engineer Authority Over Brackish Water Awaits the Governor's Signature**

**(SANTA FE, New Mexico)** - The New Mexico Senate passed a bill that would give the State Engineer authority over drilling deep wells, which is now on the Governor's desk waiting to be signed into law.

House Bill 19, sponsored by Rep. Mimi Stewart (D-Bernalillo), passed through the Senate today after it cleared the House of Representatives several weeks ago.

"Private interests are already rushing to tap supplies of brackish water deep under New Mexico before the state can adopt new laws aimed at gaining more oversight of deep wells," said New Mexico State Engineer John D'Antonio. "This has been a loophole in the law that needed to be addressed. About 44 Notices of Intent have been filed in the past year to drill deep wells to pump more than 1 million acre-feet of water a year."

While the State Engineer is charged with managing New Mexico's water, state law currently has an exception for wells that tap into aquifers that start at least 2,500 feet below the land's surface, contain brackish water, and are disconnected from upper aquifers.

Governor Richardson has three days to sign the bill into law.

The Office of the State Engineer is charged with administering the state's water resources. The State Engineer has power over the supervision, measurement, appropriation and distribution of all surface and groundwater in New Mexico, including streams and rivers that cross state boundaries. The State Engineer is also Secretary of the Interstate Stream Commission.

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