

# Arkansas Water Provider Legislative Task Force: Final Report Published



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The Arkansas Water Provider Legislative Task Force (“Task Force”) published a final version of its report titled:

*Summary Report: Vision for the Future, Challenges, Recommendations 2017-2018 Task Force Meetings (“Report”)*

Senator Allen Clark and Representative Tim Lemons co-chair the Task Force.

The Task Force was created by Act 1056 during the 89th Arkansas General Assembly. The legislation declared a number of findings regarding the water utilities provision of water to state residents. Issues associated with areas served, ability to operate monopolies, importance of water supplies to economic development, requirements to supply out-of-area customers, and other matters were addressed.

The Report outlines an abbreviated Vision Statement which reads as follows:

Clean, safe, affordable, and abundant drinking water should be available to all the citizens of Arkansas, without discrimination; and where economically feasible, provided by financially and operationally-sound public, private, or community water providers whose policies regarding the access and distribution of water are implemented in a manner that is absent of political agendas and demonstrates a commitment to the protection of consumer, industrial, economic, and agricultural rights, as well as the protection of Arkansas’s vital water resources.

Also described are essential realities and circumstances potentially impacting the Vision Statement and that are required to be considered which include:

- Arkansas’s natural resources, especially water, must be protected when promoting residential, agricultural, industrial, and economic development, while maintaining and preserving natural habitats.
- Not all Arkansas residents live and work in areas where it is achievable in terms of either cost or engineering capabilities to supply water from a public, private, or community water system due to differences in treatment, distribution, population density, availability of resources, etc. There are isolated areas of the state where it is not economically feasible to provide a “public water system” to local residents.
- Water capacity issues commonly supported by hard data and verified by appropriate state agency(s) do at times delay or prohibit access to a public, private, or community water system.
- Water providers, especially small systems, frequently lack both economies of scale and financial, managerial, and technical capacity, which can lead to problems of meeting Safe Drinking Water Act standards. ASCE (2017).

- Some Arkansas citizens do not have the financial resources to pay the rates necessary to cover the full costs of water acquisition, production, distribution, and depreciation.
- Local policies based on established boundaries have hindered decisions on water supply, availability of water, operations, and access versus the needs and rights of consumers, and for economic development.
- Decisions should be based on sound research and consumer needs, and where those needs stimulate economic development.

The Report lists what it characterizes as seven “Challenges” and following each are recommendations to address them.

The Report also addresses:

- Key Regulatory and Management Responsibilities and educational Training Strategies for Governing Bodies
- Reports and Materials Consulted
- Task Force Meeting Topics
- Appendices
- Act 1056 of 2017
- Task Force Rules of Procedure
- Senate Bill 481 of 2019

A copy of the Report can be found [here](#).