

We Will Be Your Rainmakers

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Rep. Richard Burges
Photo courtesy of the
State Preservation Board

Rep. David Glasscock
Photo courtesy of the
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Fourth in a series of posts about the 33rd Legislature, held 100 years ago. Read the previous posts on the [general atmosphere](#), [veterans](#), and [women's rights](#).

Lake Houston, May 2011

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"We Will Be Your Rainmakers"

So begins an [advertisement](#) in the May 16, 1913 edition of the [Hereford Brand](#) for a company offering irrigation and well services. At the time, Texas was coming out of a severe drought period from 1908 to 1912. (View [this animated map](#) to see just how severe.) Water management was at the fore of legislators' minds as they met for the 33rd legislative session.

A patchwork of water laws existed at the time, applying to different parts of Texas and sometimes contradicting each other. The [Burges-Glasscock Act](#), also known as the Irrigation Act of 1913, created the [Board of Water Engineers](#) and centralized the procedure for water-rights claims by making those claims go through the Board (in "certified filings").

In an address to the House, [Rep. David Glasscock](#) described a reason for the bill:

"In the magnificent sweep of her imperial domain Texas numbers localities where there is little or no rainfall, and others where the rainfall is constant and excessive that rumor reports the inhabitants as web-footed; but the complaint common to her widest region lies in the alternation of superabundance and scarcity." (p. 952, *H.J., 33rd Lege., R. S.*)

And as he closed his quite lengthy speech explaining the various aspects and benefits of the bill, he looked towards the future:

"It brings nearer to attainment the promise of the future toward which our people have set their forward faces, when the sleeping resources of Texas shall under the touch of wiser legislation awake in matchless strength to lead the nation." (p. 955, *H.J., 33rd Lege., R. S.*)

Drought and Water Law in 2013

The Handbook of Texas Online [points out](#) that "Droughts have been recorded as a problem in Texas since Spaniards explored the area." It's no surprise, then, that 100 years later, legislators are once again faced with addressing the water needs of a growing population. The state is in the midst of a drought—2011 was the [worst single-year drought](#) on record—and new practices such as [hydraulic fracturing](#) have altered the water landscape in Texas.

Funding for water development has been a high priority this session, especially funding for the [State Water Plan](#). This library [blog post](#) reviews the relevant legislation and provides links to many other legislative resources.

Recently, the House voted to send the first major water bill, [HB 4](#) by [Rep. Allan Ritter](#), to the Senate. According to the [HRO analysis](#), the bill "would create special

funds outside of the state treasury to implement the state water plan and provide a prioritization funding system on the regional and state levels, with consideration given to conservation and reuse projects and projects in rural areas," among other things.

Learn more with these library and government resources:

- View a [timeline](#) of Texas water law
- Get the [highlights](#) of water development legislation this session as well as important background information
- Read the [full speech](#) by Rep. Glasscock in *House Journal*, 33rd Lege., R. S., p. 949
- Search for current bills at [TLO](#) or historic bills on the [library's site](#). Use subjects "[Water--Development \(I0875\)](#)" and/or "[Water--General \(I0885\)](#)."
- Browse through this comprehensive review of Texas water law. Sahs, Mary K. *Essentials of Texas Water Resources*. State Bar of Texas: Austin, 2012. Call number: B600.8 E574 2012