

ORWP DEMANDS RESIGNATION OF OKLAHOMA WATER RESOURCES BOARD MEMBER TOM BUCHANAN

Southeastern Oklahoma – On Friday, March 21, Oklahomans for Responsible Water Policy (ORWP) urged Tom Buchanan, president of the Oklahoma Farm Bureau, to resign his seat on the Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB) because his role with the Farm bureau is a conflict of interest with his responsibility on the water board and his position on water use are not in the public's interest.

Buchanan operates a farm and ranch outside of Altus, Oklahoma. ORWP's demand for Mr. Buchanan to step down from his state appointed position is not the first request for his resignation.

"Mr. Buchanan has been lobbying for support to transfer Eastern Oklahoma water resources to other parts of the state as well as for sale to North Texas," said Charlette Hearne, president of ORWP. "That is clearly not in the best interest of all Oklahomans and particularly those of us in Southeastern Oklahoma. He is clearly playing to Texas' interests who are willing to pay for our water."

Further, Buchanan's interbasin and interstate water transfer plan does not stand up to scientific or economic scrutiny. There are no economic impact analyses on how a water transfer may impact the point of origin, or any other part of the state, Hearne said. There also are no scientific-based studies that have identified 'excess' or 'surplus' waters as Buchanan claims, much less on how to transfer such fictional waters.

"No one has looked critically or confirmed the lifespan of most reservoirs," she said.

Despite Buchanan's denials, ORWP believe his ill-conceived plan would dramatically impact the Red River Compact. The Red River water emanating from Southeast Oklahoma he says is "wasted water" is in truth responsible for 30% of the Red River's volume, and that water flow is vital to the stream ecology and economic growth of Arkansas and Louisiana.

Buchanan's OWRB voting record reveals he has opposed critically important scientific instream flow studies. He has also lobbied against the protection of Oklahoma's endangered and threatened endemic species before a U.S. Senate Committee in 2007, none of which occur in Western Oklahoma.

Under Mr. Buchanan's leadership, the Oklahoma Farm Bureau has filed suit against the Oklahoma Water Resources Board, other state and federal agencies, several Oklahoma towns, and hundreds of individuals. We have to ask how he can serve on a board that he has in fact sued.

ORWP believes that Mr. Buchanan's role as president of the Oklahoma Farm Bureau and manager of the Lugert-Altus Irrigation District is a clear conflict of interest with his serving as Vice-Chairman of the OWRB. He should resign his position on the OWRB board in the public interest.

ORWP feels that sacrificing the economies, ways of life, and fragile ecosystems of Eastern Oklahoma to grow crops in Western Oklahoma and build houses in North Texas is not an option. Future generations deserve an infrastructure that can sustain their ways of life, not destroy it.

Please visit www.orwp.net for more information.