

105TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 222

To establish an advisory commission to provide advice and recommendations on the creation of an integrated, coordinated Federal policy designed to prepare for and respond to serious drought emergencies.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY 28, 1997

Mr. DOMENICI introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Governmental Affairs

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## A BILL

To establish an advisory commission to provide advice and recommendations on the creation of an integrated, coordinated Federal policy designed to prepare for and respond to serious drought emergencies.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3       **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4       This Act may be cited as “The National Drought Pol-  
5       icy Act of 1997.”

6       **SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSES.**

7       The Congress finds that, although the United States  
8       often suffers serious economic and environmental losses

1 from severe regional droughts, there currently exists no  
2 coordinated Federal strategy to respond to these emer-  
3 gencies. At the Federal level, even though there have his-  
4 torically been frequent, significant droughts of national  
5 consequences, drought is addressed mainly through special  
6 legislation and ad hoc action rather than through a sys-  
7 tematic and permanent process as occurs with other natu-  
8 ral disasters. Several Federal agencies have a role in  
9 drought from predicting, forecasting, and monitoring of  
10 drought conditions to the provision of planning, technical,  
11 and financial assistance. There has never been one single  
12 agency in a lead or coordinating role with regard to  
13 drought. As a result, the State, local, and tribal govern-  
14 ments have had to deal individually and separately with  
15 each Federal agency involved. Therefore, the Congress  
16 further finds that the President should appoint an advi-  
17 sory commission to provide advice and recommendations  
18 on the creation of an integrated, coordinated Federal pol-  
19 icy designed to prepare for and respond to serious drought  
20 emergencies.

21 **SEC. 3. COMMISSION.**

22 (a) The President shall appoint an advisory commis-  
23 sion to provide recommendations on a national drought  
24 policy. The Commission shall report its recommendations  
25 to the President and to the Committee on Governmental

1 Affairs in the Senate and the Committee on Government  
2 Reform and Oversight in the House of Representatives  
3 within one year from the date of enactment of this Act.

4 (b) The members of the Commission shall include:

5 (1) The Secretary of Agriculture, or his des-  
6 ignee, who shall serve as Chairman of the Commis-  
7 sion;

8 (2) The Secretary of the Interior, or his des-  
9 ignee;

10 (3) The Secretary of the Army, or his designee;

11 (4) The Secretary of the Commerce, or his des-  
12 ignee;

13 (5) The Director of the Federal Emergency  
14 Management Agency, or his designee;

15 (6) The Administrator of the Small Business  
16 Administration, or his designee;

17 (7) A person nominated by the National Gov-  
18 ernors' Association;

19 (8) A person nominated by the United States  
20 Conference of Mayors; and

21 (9) Four persons representative of groups  
22 acutely affected by drought emergencies, such as the

1 agricultural production community, the credit com-  
2 munity, rural water associations, and Native Ameri-  
3 cans. These members shall be chosen by the Chair-  
4 man of the Commission.

5 (c) In developing its report, the Commission shall:

6 (1) Determine what needs exist on the Federal,  
7 State, local, and tribal levels to prepare for and re-  
8 spond to drought emergencies.

9 (2) Review all existing Federal laws and pro-  
10 grams relating to drought.

11 (3) Review those State, local, and tribal laws  
12 and programs relating to drought the Commission  
13 finds pertinent.

14 (4) Determine what gaps exist between the  
15 needs of those affected by drought and the Federal  
16 laws and programs designed to mitigate the impacts  
17 of and respond to drought.

18 (5) Make recommendations on how Federal  
19 drought laws and programs can be better integrated  
20 with ongoing State, local, and tribal programs into  
21 a comprehensive national policy to mitigate the im-  
22 pacts of and respond to drought emergencies without  
23 diminishing the rights of states to control water

1 through state law. The report shall include a rec-  
2 ommendation on whether all Federal drought prepa-  
3 ration and response programs should be consolidated  
4 under one existing Federal agency and, if so, the re-  
5 port shall identify such agency.

6 (d) Any vacancy on the Commission shall be filled  
7 in the such manner as the original appointment. Members  
8 of the Commission shall serve without compensation but  
9 shall be reimbursed for travel, subsistence, and other nec-  
10 essary expenses incurred by them in the performance of  
11 their duties. The Secretary of Agriculture shall provide all  
12 financial, administrative, and staffing requirements for  
13 the Commission, including office space, furnishings, and  
14 equipment. The heads of other Federal agencies are au-  
15 thorized, at the request of the Commission, to provide  
16 such information or personnel, to the extent permitted by  
17 law and within the limits of available funds, to the Com-  
18 mission as may be useful to accomplish the purposes of  
19 this section.

20 (e) The Commission may hold such hearings, and sit  
21 and act at such times and places, as it deems advisable.  
22 The Commission is authorized to use the United States  
23 mail in the same manner and upon the same conditions  
24 as other departments and agencies of the United States.