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## Town Hall with Congressmen Scott Tipton and Cory Gardner

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## TOWN HALL WITH CONGRESSMEN SCOTT TIPTON AND CORY GARDNER

The United States House of Representatives was adjourned during the Colorado Water Congress Annual Convention, so Representatives Scott Tipton and Cory Gardner were available to discuss the political challenges in Washington. Chris Treese moderated the session. Republican Congressman Scott Tipton represents Colorado's 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District and Republican Congressman Cory Gardner represents Colorado's 4<sup>th</sup> Congressional District. Both Congressmen were elected in 2010. Moderator Chris Treese is the External Affairs Manager for the Colorado River Water Conservation District.

Mr. Treese asked the Congressmen to open by identifying which current water issues in Colorado concern them most. Congressman Tipton emphasized protecting private water rights from the overreach of the federal government. For instance, he criticized the U.S. Forest Service for considering rules that would require ski resorts to assign their water rights to the federal government. Congressman Tipton believes that if private water rights are unprotected at the federal level, the collateral impacts would stretch to municipalities. The Congressman also sees the potential for job creation in the hydropower industry.

Congressman Gardner stated that his current concern in Colorado is the low snowpack this year. He is concerned that this winter looks very much like the winter preceding the spring of 2002 when the state was devastated by droughts and fires, and suffered major losses to agriculture and grazing. Congressman Gardner indicated he wanted to make sure the Bureau of Reclamation and the Army Corps of Engineers are prepared and have learned from the spring of 2002.

Next, Mr. Treese asked what the biggest surprise in Washington was for the Congressmen. Both gentlemen stated that things are worse than they thought. Although the Colorado Representatives from both parties work very well together, that level of cooperation does not extend to how the rest of Congress works together. Both Congressmen previously served in the Colorado legislature, and said the national legislature could learn from the bipartisan commitment of the Colorado State legislature. Congressman Tipton stated he feels it is his responsibility to help other members understand the regional issues and programs in the West. Congressman Gardner emphasized that water should be a bipartisan issue because it affects everyone.

Mr. Treese asked about the federal government's role in getting project permitting done faster. Congressman Gardner said that once a state has approved what the water users want, the federal government should not get in the way. Congressman Tipton said there is a need to clear away the unnecessary red tape in project permitting.

The Congressmen next discussed the water quality impacts of the oil and gas industry and what the appropriate role of the federal government should be in providing consistency and security for investors. Congressman Tipton stated he wants to safely and cleanly develop energy re-

sources in Colorado. He says fracking is inherently safe and the chemicals used should be regulated at the state level. Congressman Gardner wanted to encourage conversations about safety in the oil and gas industry, but he also wanted Colorado to pursue wind and solar options.

Next, Mr. Treese asked the Congressmen to make a case for why Republicans should be returned to power. Congressman Gardner said that Republicans are the ones who have aggressively fought the growing national debt, and Republicans will keep the government from getting in the way of future economic growth. Congressman Tipton emphasized that what matters most are jobs and the economy, especially in his district where real unemployment is over twenty percent. He pointed out that he and Congressman Gardner were not in office when the problem was created, but now they are both committed to fixing the problem and focusing on job creation.

Finally, Mr. Treese asked the Congressmen to identify what their top priorities are for this session. Congressman Gardner said his top priority is to get the country back to work. He said that the government cannot only create jobs itself, but it can also get out of the way to make it easier for the private sector to create jobs. Congressman Tipton said the government should be the stepping stone rather than the stumbling block for jobs and a strong economy. He wants to focus on reasonable regulations and trade agreements to increase American exports.

*Jessica Bidgood*

#### COLORADO WATER 2012 AUTHORS

Justice Gregory J. Hobbs, Jr. of the Colorado Supreme Court spoke about the Water 2012 Book Club, which will be featuring Colorado authors, and introduced two of the featured authors, Craig Childs and Jon Waterman. Justice Hobbs spoke highly of both authors' books and encouraged the audience to read them.

Craig Childs, a natural science and archeology writer and author of *House of Rain* (Little, Brown and Co., 2007), discussed his book first. He began by explaining his relationship with water, framing it via how he learned to find water in the desert. Childs described his experiences searching for springs and rain deposits to sustain him during his travels throughout the Southwest. He marveled at the rich history of the land as he described the pottery, arrowheads, and dwellings of ancient civilizations that he encountered, and further described climbing into the mountains and finding springs in cliff dwellings. Childs said often saw pottery on the ground that had not moved in hundreds of years.

He next discussed an ancient symbol that appears at dwelling sites, including places on a large Navajo reservation. The symbol signifies water; that an aquifer is present. Childs reminisced about a time that he saw this symbol and followed it through a series of doors into a cave. When he heard the sound of water dropping into a pool, he knew he had found something significant. He talked about the beauty of the place and the