

A Land-and-Water grab? No.

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Atlanta's water shortage is unquestionably a serious crisis, however it is one long foreseen and neglected by the Atlanta region's own leaders. That makes the idea, advanced by two Georgia lawmakers, of attempting to lay claim to water from the Tennessee River by moving Georgia's northern border a bit further north where the Tennessee River dips south doubly outlandish. These lawmakers appear to care little about actually solving their water-use crisis, rather they seem more interested in "watering" the problem and letting it continue to flourish.

The idea of moving a state border established in 1818 is ludicrous and Georgia isn't the only state reeling from record-setting drought. It's gripping every state in the Southeast, including Tennessee. Tennessee's southern border with Georgia is virtually a straight horizontal line across the bottom of the state. Legal precedents and case law against such an unbelievable land grab aside, adjusting the border a mile or so to gain a hold on the Tennessee River could effectively transfer a broad area of Tennessee's land to Georgia's control.

The number of Tennessee communities affected, including St. Elmo, East Lake, East Ridge and East Brainerd, would ripple along the border. Where would it stop, and how many communities would be affected? We're sure the Georgia legislators who came up with this scheme, both Atlanta-area Republican legislators, have no idea. The severe drought notwithstanding, Atlanta-area leaders are largely responsible for their water crisis. They shelved plans years ago to build a series of reservoirs, and never contemplated serious measures to curtail sprawl, limit growth or impose water use restrictions as the their growth continued to spiraled out of control.

Attaching Tennessee land to draw water from the Tennessee River would not fix Atlanta's problem. It would merely prolong it in unsustainable fashion, even as it drained water out of the Tennessee River's water basin and aggravated downstream navigation, hydro-electric and water-resource issues. Tennessee has a strong and wise law prohibiting such transfers precisely for those reasons. TVA and the Army Corps of Engineers have jurisdictional water control rights, as well. Georgia would do better to leave a land and-water grab alone, and deal with the roots of its water crisis at home.