

# Roth: Water, anyone?

## THE JOURNAL RECORD

There have been a lot of topics left out of the national conversation leading up to our presidential election at the beginning of next month. Yet, of the forgotten, water is among the most critical. Water affects our daily lives, our energy policy, our foreign affairs, and it plays a vital role in the other forgotten topic of climate change. No doubt, as you hopefully took a shower this morning, you were likely unaware of what a critical resource you were using that went down your drain forgotten. Consider water in foreign affairs. Since the dawn of time, literally, the world has been engaged in conflict over water. But this conflict is very modern as well.

In 2009, North Korea released about 40 million cubic meters of water from the Wanggag dam, which caused a flash flood in South Korea. This has created real fears that water can be used as a weapon in one of the world's most volatile regions.

How about Pakistan and India? They are constantly engaged in conflicts over access to water and irrigation rights with credible reports demonstrating that groups like al-Qaeda are working diligently to gain more access to water in the region.

Even this week's presidential debate raised questions about American interest in the Middle East persuaded by a country's access to water, mostly because of energy exportation. These geopolitical realities show us that water can be both a weapon of terror and a source of life. America's position on water in the world should be playing an important role in our future.

Consider water in energy. Water is utilized in virtually every form of power generation. By most estimates, close to 40 percent of America's water is used in the generation phase at

America's power plants. Not to mention that water is also used in voluminous amounts to extract energy in its many forms like in drilling or mining. Water is an essential part of our country's energy future.

GE recently released a survey that has some interesting results: 83 percent of Americans are concerned about the availability of clean water for the future, 77 percent of Americans feel that water scarcity is a national issue and 73 percent feel decisions to protect water resources are the responsibility of the national government.

Too bad 0 percent of us have heard about it so far in this election cycle. Wouldn't want to rain on anyone's parade, yet I'm thinking this is as much an important subject as binders and bayonets.

*Roth, a former Oklahoma corporation commissioner, is an attorney with Phillips Murrah P.C. in Oklahoma City, where his practice focuses on clean, green energy for Oklahoma.*