

U.S. Rep. Mike Coffman on Monday unveiled a proposal to give tax breaks to people who buy water-saving toilets, sprinkler systems and other items for their houses.

Coffman said he hopes the proposed credit, which was formally introduced earlier this month and has bipartisan support in Congress, will spur a greater culture of conservation in Colorado. He noted the state faces an estimated 630,000-acre-foot water-supply shortfall by 2030. One acre-foot could serve the needs of about eight people for a year.

"This legislation will help conserve one of our most precious resources," said Coffman, an Aurora Republican. "Conservation has got to be our first line of defense in our ability to meet our future water demand."

Dubbed the Water Accountability Tax Efficiency Reinvestment Act, the measure would provide a tax credit equal to 30 percent of the cost of each purchased item bearing the Environmental Protection Agency's WaterSense label. WaterSense products, including toilets, faucets and sprinkler systems, are at least 20 percent more efficient than average ones.

The credit amount would be capped at \$1,500 per year.

The credit would function almost identically to an existing tax credit for purchases of electricity-saving Energy Star-rated products.

Two members of Colorado's congressional delegation — Betsy Markey, a Democrat from Fort Collins, and Doug Lamborn, a Republican from Colorado Springs — have signed on as co-sponsors.

A phalanx of local elected officials from the fast-growing suburbs south of Denver stood behind Coffman at the Monday news conference where he announced the legislation. County commissioners from both Arapahoe and Douglas counties said they support the measure.

"This is exactly the right legislation at exactly the right time," said Mark Shively, executive director of the Douglas County Water Authority.

Known as HR 1908, the measure was referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

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