

NO ON THE WATER BOND

Open Letter to the Delegates of the California Democratic Party Convention

April 16, 2010

To the Delegates:

We can all agree that California faces significant challenges in terms of water supply, infrastructure and related environmental concerns.

But the water bond that has been placed on this November's ballot by the Legislature and the Governor is the wrong way to address those issues. We urge you to learn more and to oppose this misguided measure.

This \$11.14 billion bond measure will cost California taxpayers \$22 billion after principal and interest are paid, with an annual cost of \$800 million. It's the largest water bond ever put before voters – and in the middle of a deep recession.

Just think about the horrible budget cuts we are seeing now in Sacramento. With this water bond, future Legislatures will be forced to cut even deeper into bone, sacrificing education, healthcare and public safety so that we can pay for this flawed water package. In this financial climate, how can anyone advocate for a bond with such devastating consequences?

It's not just the money that is a problem. The water bond makes public policy choices that are fundamentally flawed and misguided:

- **Failing to require water-project beneficiaries to pay.** It's a decades-old tradition that those who benefit from water projects, particularly vast storage projects, pay for them. Instead, this bond provides unprecedented levels of taxpayer money.
- **Giveaways to big business.** Agriculture is big business in California, \$36 billion per year, using 80% of the state's water. But neither the recent water legislation nor this bond makes significant new requirements for conservation, more efficient farming or cost-sharing.
- **Favoring dams.** The bond itself sets aside \$3 billion for water storage projects, with new dams being favored. This is a wasteful 19th-century technology, completely inappropriate in a time of climate change, with only one certain impact: devastation of the environment.
- **Building a peripheral canal.** Supporters of the bond, including the Governor and Meg Whitman, view the bond as a key step toward building a peripheral canal around the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, a move voters have rejected overwhelmingly.

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1107 9th St., Suite 360 • Sacramento, CA 95814 • (916) 444-8726 • FPPC ID# 1324820

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- **Privatization of water supplies.** After dams are built with the aid of taxpayer funds, the technical language of the bond allows private corporations to take over management of them. They can control public water supplies and resell the water at a profit.

We hope you will join us in recognizing that this costly water bond is ill-timed, unaffordable, loaded with political pork, in direct conflict with more pressing budgetary priorities, and overflowing with highly controversial public policy choices.

Please join us in opposing this misguided water bond.

Sincerely,

Former California
Attorney General
John Van de Kamp

Senator Mark Leno

Senator Byron Sher
(retired)

Senator Lois Wolk

Senator Leland Yee

Assemblyman Tom
Ammiano

Assemblywoman
Joan Buchanan

Assemblywoman
Noreen Evans

Assemblywoman
Alyson Huber



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