

# **EDITORIAL: If we are in a water crisis, our leaders should act like it**

**California's cities should limit the nonessential use of water.**

<http://www.fresnobee.com/2014/02/19/3780319/if-we-are-in-a-water-crisis-our.html>

By The Fresno Bee Editorial Board

Fresno

February 19, 2014 Updated 12 hours ago

The California drought has finally gotten the attention of state and federal officials, and they are even taking actions that could be helpful in the short term. Last week, President Barack Obama announced drought relief assistance for California and on Wednesday, Gov. Jerry Brown and legislative Democrats offered their drought legislation.

The prolonged drought has serious implications for the state's economy. In addition to threatening the state's agricultural industry and driving up food prices, a lack of water could reduce availability of water for urban uses across California.

While agriculture has been feeling the impact of the drought for several months, mayors and city council members of California's cities have been conducting business as usual when it comes to limiting urban water use.

This head-in-the-sand approach shows a remarkable lack of understanding of the crucial need for all of us — farmer or city dweller — to save water. Valley cities especially should be restricting the use of water for nonessential purposes, such as landscaping.

The irony is that the government closest to the people is ignoring the drought problem while the federal and state governments are taking action.

Gov. Brown put his finger on the issue on Wednesday: "There are many ways we can better use the water we have. You can't manufacture water."

If we are in a drought emergency, we all should be sacrificing to save water.

On Wednesday, the governor and legislative leaders announced a \$687 million package aimed at providing immediate aid to drought-stricken communities. The plan would provide \$15 million for communities whose water supplies are in danger of going dry.

This appears to be a good start, but legislative Democrats must reach across the aisle to bring Republicans into their drought strategy. Put party labels aside, and attack the drought crisis on a bipartisan basis.

We agree with Republicans that much more must be done to meet California's long-term water needs. Both parties should be doing both — offer both short-term and long-term solutions to our water needs.

In this drought year, our leaders must find a way to balance the competing water needs of agriculture, cities and the environment.

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