

California water bond fight in flux

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The drought-driven quest to put a new water bond before California voters has fluctuated over the last few weeks, marked by new measures appearing, old ones evaporating and legislators shifting allegiances. Lawmakers have introduced no fewer than nine water bond proposals, all vying to replace the [\\$11.1 billion measure](#) that is scheduled for the November ballot but widely believed to have little chance of passage.

Getting a new bond on the ballot would require a two-thirds vote of the Legislature, which means Senate Democrats would need to find a consensus with their Republican colleagues. But the ever-shifting dynamics in the Assembly so far have suggested that there, too, partisan politics will not be the main divide.

"In the end we're going to need both Republicans and Democrats to come together to pass this bond," Assembly Member Jimmy Gomez, D-Los Angeles, said on Tuesday.

Here's a quick recap of how things stand:

- As new proposals pop up -- Sen. Ben Hueso, D-San Diego, introduced a [\\$9.45 billion measure](#) backed by the California Association of Water Agencies on Monday -- others have shriveled. [One bill](#) jointly authored by Valley Republican Sens. **Andy Vidak** of Hanford and **Anthony Cannella** of Ceres failed in committee last week. A followup statement from Vidak hinted where he'll turn next.

"I will continue to work in a bipartisan fashion to make sure that whatever water bond the Legislature ultimately puts forth provides the full \$3 billion for water storage," Vidak said in the statement.

- On Tuesday, Assembly Member Dan Logue, R-Marysville, abandoned his [storage-centric measure](#), instead backing a bond by Assembly Member **Henry T. Perea**, D-Fresno.

[That Perea bond](#), which also has a heavy emphasis on allocating money for big surface storage projects, passed the Assembly Parks, Water and Wildlife committee on Tuesday.

- Also emerging from the committee and heading to Assembly Appropriations was [a \\$7.935 billion proposal](#) by Valley Republicans **Frank Bigelow** of O'Neals and **Connie Conway** of Tulare.

- The committee also advanced a bond measure by the panel's chair, Assembly Member Anthony Rendon, that is one of two bond bills the Lakewood Democrat is pushing this year.

Rendon's [original proposal](#) is already in the Senate, but he has objected to amendments dictating more specific outlays for bond money. Determined to avoid the appearance of earmarks, Rendon has offered a parallel bill as a second vessel. [Assembly Bill 2554](#) on Tuesday emerged from Rendon's committee and headed for Assembly Appropriations.

- Awaiting judgment in Senate Appropriations is [a \\$6.8 billion bond bill](#) by Sen. Lois Wolk, D-Davis. Unlike other lawmakers who have cited the drought as evidence California needs to build more storage capacity, Wolk has been skeptical of big surface storage projects. She also wants to ensure the Legislature is forced to approve bond spending every year, rather than keep the spigot flowing with a continuous appropriation. *The reporter can be reached at jwhite@sacbee.com.*