

Frank Bigelow: Why we're thirsty for consensus

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You may have heard the saying, "Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good," or some variation. This is a solid reminder for California's lawmakers to take to heart as talks continue on crafting a water bond that will help protect our state's well-being, better prepare us for future droughts and create badly needed jobs.

As it stands now, Gov. Jerry Brown and lawmakers from both parties have not been able to come to an agreement that would provide adequate funding for water storage, groundwater, drought relief and other priorities. With the current drought inflicting devastating damage throughout the state, especially in bone-dry Valley communities, the time to act decisively is now. The debate continues in Sacramento.

To address the drought, several lawmakers this year introduced their own water bond proposals. I co-authored one of those proposals with Assembly Republican Leader Connie Conway of Tulare. I also co-authored AB 2686 by Fresno Democrat Assembly Member Henry T. Perea.

None of these measures has yet won the necessary two-thirds support to be placed on the November ballot for the voters to decide.

Time is quickly running out to place a new bond on this year's ballot. If nothing is done to address the water crisis, we could end up where we began — a failing status quo that is hurting our economy, our livelihoods and our quality of life.

Water is one issue where all Californians can — and should — come together in an effort to support our depleting supplies. We may not agree on everything, but we should do all we can to accommodate each other's top priorities.

My top priorities include having enough money (preferably \$3 billion) to build enough water storage for the future, protecting groundwater and improving water-supply reliability in the Delta. Most Valley legislators also share these goals. We are willing to negotiate on the details and work on the other components of a water bond, and I am hopeful we can do so soon.

Achieving a final agreement in the next few weeks is a realistic possibility. Contrary to what some may believe, Democrats and Republicans have come together to pass meaningful legislation this year.

For example, we passed a strong rainy day fund in May that saves money for future budget emergencies. Like the water bond, debate over the rainy day fund dragged on for years. If lawmakers can achieve consensus on a major issue this year, then we can certainly produce a second bipartisan agreement that will benefit everyone.

Make no mistake: this drought is a statewide crisis. Our dire lack of water supply is one of which we have not seen in our lifetimes. Let's fix it before it gets worse. It is something that we can solve if we all work together.

I am ready to do my part to get the job done, and I hope my colleagues and Gov. Brown are, too.

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