

# De León, Vidak tangle over Vidak's state Senate performance

[fb fresnobee.com /2014/07/22/4035998/de-leon-vidak-tangle-over-vidaks.html](http://fresnobee.com/2014/07/22/4035998/de-leon-vidak-tangle-over-vidaks.html)

State Sen. Andy Vidak, R-Hanford

During a recent Fresno visit, state Senate president pro tem-elect Kevin de León listed some reasons that his fellow senator, Hanford Republican Andy Vidak, shouldn't be reelected.

In a nutshell, De León said that being a member of the minority party in Sacramento will hinder Vidak from getting things done for his district.

He also said that when Vidak's vote did matter — such as placing a water bond on the November ballot, which de León said would have helped the central San Joaquin Valley — he voted against the proposal.

Summing up, de León hinted that the Hanford Republican might, politically speaking, not be ready for prime time.



"It's hard work, especially if you have an area that is disproportionately impacted by all the challenges, for example, that the Central Valley has," de León, D-Los Angeles, said. "You've got to have someone who is going to roll up their sleeves and really tackle this issue. You can't have someone who is starry eyed — I wear cowboy boots and I ride a big truck. And that, in itself, is what I deliver for the Valley. No, this is real-life stuff."

Vidak shot right back when told of de León's comments.

"He obviously feels threatened," he said. "I understand the real world and actually understand my district. Common sense has no party lines. His whole life is gamesmanship. That's why he wants to be (Senate) leader."

To a certain extent, the comments weren't surprising. De León is, after all, a Democrat. And his response was in a question about Vidak's 14th state Senate District opponent, Fresno Democrat Luis Chavez.

De León said the question for voters in the November election is will they elect "someone who will not able to deliver — is symbolism important or being faithful to the GOP is important — or having someone who is going to be in a position who can actually deliver something that is real."

As a Democrat, he suggested Chavez would be in that position.

But his further comments suggested that Vidak was more style than substance, and he used Vidak's "no" vote on a water bond pushed by Davis Democrat Lois Wolk — and co-sponsored by de León — to show that he'll vote against the interests of his own district instead of recognizing a grand compromise.

Wolk's water bond proposal had \$3 billion for above-ground storage, and de León suggested a better deal might never come along for Republicans who want new dams in California.

Legislators are currently looking for an alternative water bond to replace the \$11.1 billion bond written in 2009 that is currently on the November ballot. It is widely believed that voters will reject the current bond

proposal.

Because a two-thirds majority is required on the water-bond vote, Republicans such as Vidak are players. But Vidak said Wolk's proposal — while a step in the right direction — still falls short.

"First of all, it's not the only (water bond proposal)," he said. "Why vote for one that's worse than one we have on the ballot already. Call me crazy."

Vidak said negotiations are progressing and he hopes when legislators return in August a better water-bond proposal can win the needed two-thirds approval to get on the November ballot.

But de León said it may end up being a wasted opportunity for Vidak to chalk up a legislative accomplishment.

"If you can quantify and measure and tell me specifically what Andy Vidak has been able to deliver to date, you will bowl me over," de León said. "On his own initiative. To move something. To have the brain power to take something arcane and complex and at the same time have everyone come in with a knife simultaneously and know how to navigate the mine fields to say 'I've got to cross that finish line and be able to deliver something to help improve the human condition.'"

Vidak's staff points out he helped pass driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants, put together a bipartisan coalition of Valley legislators to call on the governor to declare a drought emergency and authored a measure calling on the president to use his executive power to get water to the Valley.

It is in direct opposition to de León, but Vidak also is a leading opponent of the state's high-speed rail proposal, he points out. But the one de León comment that got Vidak was his list of issues that are affecting the Valley that Vidak needs to address. It included "climate change."

"That just tells me what he knows about my district," said Vidak, who like many in his district is a climate change skeptic.

"Obviously, it is just tumbleweeds between Fresno and Bakersfield," Vidak said. De León and some other Senate Democrats "have no clue about the Valley. That's my job everyday, to teach them something. But we've got to start slow."