

Local officials blast Governor's drought legislation

Published on 04/02/2015 - 1:59 pm

Written by George Lurie

[1 Comment](#)



Local leaders blasted Governor Brown's drought legislation at a Thursday press conference in Selma. More than two dozen local elected officials held a press conference Thursday morning in Selma to voice their displeasure with Governor Jerry Brown's \$1 billion emergency drought legislation.

Gathering outside the entrance to Selma City Hall, the local leaders said Brown's drought package, which was signed into law March 27, provides little relief for Central Valley communities and their residents impacted by California's historic drought.

Standing behind poster-sized photos of shantytowns and food lines bearing the caption: 'Is this your California?' one after another, the local politicians blasted the governor and officials in Sacramento for not doing enough to bring more water to the Central Valley.

"We are already doing our part," said Selma Mayor Scott Robertson. "Sacramento, you need to do yours."

Speaking in Spanish, Robertson added: "No water, no work, no life."

Fresno County Supervisor Buddy Mendes accused Governor Brown of being "asleep."

"Governor Brown, you are not paying attention to what's going on in our Valley," Mendes added, pleading for an easing of Delta pumping restrictions that would allow more surface water to be delivered to Central California.

"The governor has the power to change pumping regulations" by declaring an emergency, Mendes said.

Tulare County Supervisor Allen Ishida talked about the large number of private wells that have gone dry in Tulare County.

“We can not provide emergency water year in and year out,” Ishida said. “This is a dire situation. We are looking at impacts that are going to last for years.”

Ishida, a citrus grower, said that in order to keep his trees from dying last season, he had paid more than \$300,000 to a private water supplier.

This year, Ishida will lose about 160 acres of citrus trees. “There’s just no water for them,” he said.

Speaker after speaker said Governor Brown’s drought relief legislation does little to address the agricultural and municipal water supply needs of the Valley, now entering its second year of “zero” water allocations.

Brown’s package does provide funding to various Valley outlets for food and water distribution but many of the local leaders at the Selma press conference said the governor’s recent legislation directs too much money toward flood control projects and water conservation — and not nearly enough to agriculture.

“Without water, we’ll continue to lose jobs,” said Fresno County Supervisor Brian Pacheco.

“Governor, I dare you to try to live a week without water,” said Porterville City Council member Virginia Gurrola, describing how children in East Porterville “couldn’t take baths and had to take a bucket of water into the bathroom just to flush the toilet” because their wells had gone dry.

“This is a crisis,” Gurrola said. “And it’s getting worse.”

Baldomero Hernandez, superintendent of Westside Elementary School in Five Points, said the drought situation had caused tremendous hardships for area students.

“Governor, you need to look at what’s going on right here in your own state,” Hernandez said.

Visalia Mayor Steve Nelsen said it was “time for all of the political rhetoric to stop. We need to look at how we can fast-track projects that will bring water into the Valley.”

Former Fresno County Supervisor Phil Larson questioned whether it would take “food lines in Los Angeles and San Francisco in order to get the governor’s attention” regarding the impact the drought is having in the Valley.

“Governor, wake up,” Larson said. “Here is where the crops are produced.”

Mendota Mayor Robert Silva said, “We’ve already got food lines in Mendota.”

Calling the second year of zero water allocations “tragic, especially for the west side of the Valley,” Silva added, “This is not the life people around the Valley deserve.”

[inShare2](#)