

## Kristin Olsen: We need your voice to help secure water supply

By Kristin Olsen

Two votes that will affect the lives of literally everyone in our region will take place at the state Capitol on Monday. It is vital that people in our communities travel to Sacramento to make our voices heard.

California is in the midst of a water crisis, the likes of which we have not seen. Nature may be to blame for the lack of rain and snowfall, but government is responsible for making this historic drought even worse by not preparing for it in advance.

We, the people, have done our part by passing the Proposition 1 water bond last November that provides billions to fund new water storage and other projects to increase supply. Now, it's time for state government to take action and move these projects out of bureaucracy and into construction. Such action is vital to our state's economy and every region of California – rural, suburban and urban.

Did you know it takes 8 gallons of water to produce one computer chip, and 1 gallon of water to produce an almond? Our water problems are *both* urban and rural, with impacts growing in severity every day the drought worsens.

Our water crisis is statewide and demands statewide solutions to increase supplies for all regions, which is exactly why voters overwhelmingly passed the water bond. The best way to protect ourselves from future droughts is to build more storage capacity.

No civilized society seeks to destroy its own food supply. No civilized society seeks to destroy one of its economic strengths. Yet, that is exactly what government policies are leading us toward in California.

Together, we must demand that state government act to increase water supply so that farmers can grow their crops, businesses can thrive, the unemployed can get back to work, and families can lead healthy lives.

One common-sense solution is Assembly Bill 311, written by my colleague, Assemblyman James Gallagher. This measure would streamline the review process under the California Environmental Quality Act – in the same way the Legislature did for the Sacramento Kings basketball arena last year – so that construction can begin as soon as possible on the state's most urgently needed water storage projects, Sites Reservoir northwest of Sacramento and Temperance Flat Dam east of Fresno.

If the Legislature can speed up the environmental review process to build a basketball arena, surely we can do the same to increase water supply for Californians. Unfortunately, environmental extremists are fighting the passage of this important legislation.

Another important reform for our region is Assembly Bill 1242 by Assemblyman Adam Gray. It would require the State Water Resources Control Board to consider the impacts to groundwater when it orders more surface water out of our rivers for fish and environmental purposes. This legislation is of critical importance to the future of our community's economy, as the state threatens to demand significantly more water flows into Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta from our rivers – water our businesses, farmers, cities, schools and families rely on for survival.

Monday, we will have a rally on the north steps of the state Capitol at 11 a.m. Join us to speak out in support of California's water needs.

At 1:30 p.m., plan to attend the Natural Resources Committee hearing in the Capitol's Room 447 to show support for both AB 311 and AB 1242.

It is no exaggeration to say these two measures will significantly impact our local economy and quality of life. Their passage or defeat may determine whether there will always be water coming out of our taps when we turn them on, and whether there will be enough water to produce the food that feeds California and the world.

Olsen represents the 12th Assembly District, which includes portions of Stanislaus and San Joaquin counties, and is the Assembly Republican leader. Follow on Twitter: @KristinOlsenCA