

# Jeff Denham and David Valadao: Democrats refused to help California's thirsty farmers

By Jeff Denham and David Valadao

It should come as no shock to anyone that in California water is our biggest issue. Access or lack of a steady water supply impacts our jobs, our livelihoods, our economy and all of our families.

Since we first arrived in Congress, increasing water supplies has taken top priority. As representatives of the Valley, we considered our primary responsibility to secure water storage for our constituents. This has always impacted how we focused our committee work, the bills we've sponsored and co-sponsored, and where we've invested our time and energy.

For five years, California's Republican members of the House of Representatives have worked with our Senate counterparts on a comprehensive water solution. We've offered our ideal solutions by joining forces to pass numerous bills to dramatically increase storage, plan for dry years and alleviate the pain our farmers and farming families are feeling from the ongoing drought.

We've also entered into extensive negotiations on an annual basis to try to find compromise between those bills and the proposals of our senators and the House Democrats. This has meant lengthy discussions with not only the Senate, but also with the Obama administration, irrigation and urban water districts throughout the state, conservationist groups and hundreds of stakeholders.

This month we have seen California's senators once again fail millions of Californians by walking away from years of ongoing negotiations where a number of their ideas were accepted.

The end-of-year omnibus funding bill provided an opportunity to pass our carefully negotiated bill, and California's senators – Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer – balked, claiming that they weren't aware of what was being proposed. Democratic House members joined the chorus, telling the public that they hadn't been involved in the negotiations – which is patently false.

The irony here is that this isn't the first time California Democrats have abandoned their constituents' needs in favor of spinning a better story in the press.

The truth is that in this year alone, the two sides of the aisle have been negotiating for months. At the request of Sen. Feinstein, we convened an informal conference to negotiate in advance of any Senate action. Several of the same Democratic members who recently claimed they had been left in the dark during negotiations had staff members at the same table. And after House Republicans proposed provisions to include in the omnibus budget bill a laundry list of both Democratic and Republican priorities, instead of objecting to negotiators, Sen. Feinstein threw up her hands and publicly rejected the proposal.

Californians should not confuse motion with action and should hold them accountable for the pain they are causing by providing nothing but rhetoric.

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