

Editorial: Don't rush water bond talks

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With dry conditions igniting fires statewide and reservoirs dropping ever lower, state lawmakers should be thinking about water. The good thing – they are. They are thinking about a 2014 water bond.

Both chambers have produced legislation to rescind and scale back the bloated \$11.14billion water bond that, if left unchanged, would head to the ballot in 2014 and face certain defeat. The total amounts would be \$5.6billion in the Senate version vs. \$6.5billion in the Assembly bill. Both would invest in clean drinking water, an issue that has risen in priority – particularly in the San Joaquin Valley – since the Legislature originally approved a bond proposal. Both have pots of money for water storage and watershed projection.

There are differences between these two pieces of legislation, both in substance and the process that produced them. Senate Bill 42, by Sen. Lois Wolk, D-Davis, was drafted following several stakeholder meetings, including ones with Wolk's constituents in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. As a result, it includes \$500million in proposed investments in Central Valley Flood Protection Plan projects, a priority for flood-threatened Delta and Sacramento residents. It also gives the Legislature more control over how storage money is spent, a priority for many environmental groups.

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