

## CA Democrats Shut Down GOP's Water Storage Bills

by Daniel Nussbaum 28 Apr 2015

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Joel Pollak / Breitbart News

**California Democrats in the State Assembly's Natural Resources and Transportation committees voted down a trio of bills on Monday designed to prioritize water storage and recycling projects amidst the state's devastating four-year drought.**

AB 397 and AB 956, both authored by Assemblyman Devon Mathis (R-Porterville), and AB 311, authored by Assemblyman James Gallagher (R-Nicolaus), were defeated along party lines in a vote Monday.

Mathis' [AB 397](#) would have prohibited California from issuing any additional bonds for the state's costly high-speed rail project, and diverted that funding toward the construction of statewide water projects. [AB 956](#) would have exempted any state water recycling project from being subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), legislation that requires lengthy environmental impact reports to be completed before construction of large projects can begin.

Assemblyman Mathis issued a statement on the failure of his bills:

*"I am very disappointed that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle failed to put water where their mouth is on the water issue. Time and again, they are given the opportunity to enact true policy which would bring water to a thirsty California. And time and again, they stand against the people of California to side with their big labor and environmental extremist special interest groups."*



Also defeated Monday in the Assembly Natural Resources Committee was AB 311, a bill which would have allowed construction of critical water storage projects to continue while CEQA environmental impact reports were completed.

"Democrats today ignored the pleas of farmers, farmworkers, business and labor leaders and ordinary citizens who came to the Capitol to ask lawmakers to expedite new water storage projects," Assemblyman Gallagher said in a statement.

The bill's authors had hoped to persuade at least two of the six Democrats on the nine-member committee to vote for the bill by narrowing the list of projects it would cover to those outlined in the [CalFED-Bay Delta Program](#); namely, construction at the long-dormant Sites Reservoir project and work at the Temperance Flat dam on the San Joaquin River.

Supporters of Gallagher's bill have contended for years that CEQA gives environmental interests a tool to arbitrarily delay or derail critical construction projects by filing lawsuits against the builders.

Last year, the California Legislature passed AB 743, a bill similar to Gallagher's in which the NBA's Sacramento Kings basketball arena was exempted from CEQA environmental impact reports.

"It is disappointing that the majority party has no problem granting expedited reviews for football stadiums and sports arenas, yet stands in the way of critical projects for our economy and our quality of life," Gallagher added.

Assemblyman Das Williams (D-Santa Barbara), chairman of the Natural Resources Committee, [told the Sacramento Bee](#) that comparisons of the bill to the arena project's legislation were unfair.

"If people want to do bills that's like the Sacramento Kings bill, what they would want to do is identify a specific project, go to the supporters and opposition, have them meet together and come up with the mitigation measures," Williams told the paper. "This has not been done in either case."

For his part, Mathis, who is serving his first term in the Assembly, said there is an even "greater threat" to California than the state's water shortage problems.

"I came to Sacramento determined to work with all willing members to find real world solutions to our state's problems," Mathis said. "The only greater threat to the people of this state than the historic drought is an out of control government."