

Lawmakers Urge Water Commission to Fund Storage Projects

POSTED 8:34 PM, FEBRUARY 21, 2018, BY [LONNIE WONG](#)



SACRAMENTO -- Senator Jim Nielsen (R-Chico) told the State Water Commission that when voters approved California's historic water bond in 2014, it was understood that nearly \$3 billion would go to water storage projects -- meaning reservoirs. Nielsen helped write Proposition 1 and got the approval by the governor, but so far no projects have been approved.

Republican's in California's state legislature delivered petitions Wednesday to the commission -- calling for the immediate allocation of funding for state reservoirs.

"There was a promise made to the citizens, a promise," said Nielsen. "They already feel betrayed by a four year delay."

A half a dozen lawmakers from agricultural districts wondered about the strings attached to the judging process calling for delta protection, flood control, effects on wildlife and recreational benefits.

Critics complained that the commission staff was unclear about what was expected.

"These projects make a lot of sense and have multiple benefits and still received low scores," said Assem. Jim Gallagher (R-Yuba City.)

The lawmakers urged cooperation and warned of the consequences of not following the intent of the proposition

"We're going to have a lot of unhappy people, not only in the legislature but throughout this state," said Gallagher.

A coalition of groups opposing the Nevada Irrigation's Centennial Dam proposal between Grass Valley and Colfax were celebrating the commission's low score for the project.

"We think the way they handled this process is exactly how a public process should be working," said Julie Pokrandt, a member of the South Yuba River Citizens League.

The commission chair defended the process while acknowledging the complaints.

"Believe me this commission is anxious to get the money projects out the door and projects funded," said Armando Quintero, chair of the State Water Commission

Nielsen believes legislators got the message.

"I think they clearly got the message, I think the legislators were absolutely unified," said Nielsen.

The commission tried to reassure lawmakers by saying their selection process should be completed by July.