

From: [Jeff Janas](mailto:Jeff.Janas@westerngrowers.com)
To: maven@mavensnotebook.com
Subject: Nassif Statement Regarding Congressional House Republicans' Efforts to Address California Water Shortage
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Irvine Calif. (January 22, 2014) -- Western Growers President and CEO Tom Nassif released this statement in response to a press conference held in Bakersfield, Calif., today with Speaker John Boehner and California members of Congress House Majority Whip, Kevin McCarthy; Congressman David Valadao; and Congressman Devin Nunes who have proposed legislation to address the worsening drought in California:

"The drought is doing great damage to farmers, farm workers and many other people who are part of the most productive agriculture state in the country. Federal regulatory decisions made last year in the Delta made this situation much worse, by failing to pump and store more than 800,000 acre feet of winter runoff. The federal agencies charged with implementing fish species protections in the Delta declined to use their available discretion to capture that water, instead letting it flow out to sea.

It is time for Congress to act. We appreciate the efforts of Speaker Boehner and Congressmen McCarthy, Nunes and Valadao to encourage action by both houses of Congress on this crisis. We believe bipartisan agreement is necessary and possible. There are very moderate and reasonable steps available, such as federal legislation giving the regulatory agencies clear direction to allow the state and federal water project pumps in the Delta to operate at higher levels than they have in recent years. We must capture water runoff when it is available and store it for the protection of our farms and communities.

Our state's water system is overdue for serious upgrades. We need more storage facilities and greater support for desalinization and water reuse projects that reduce reliance on the Delta. A refocused water bond should be presented to the state's voters with strong support from our state and federal leaders. Federal action to raise the existing Shasta Dam should be expedited. Improved conveyance facilities in the Delta are essential for improving water supply reliability in much of the state as well as restoring the Delta ecosystem, as envisioned by the Bay Delta Conservation Plan.

There is so much to be done, but there has been so little action in Congress so far. We hope that the Speaker's engagement today marks a willingness by members of both parties and both houses of Congress to work toward bipartisan solutions to the water supply crisis that threatens thousands of America's most productive farmers and thousands more whose livelihood is tied to their survival. "



Jeff Janas

Communications Manager

Office: 949.885.2318

Cell: 949.220.3434

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