

# California reaps bitter harvest of environmental extremism

**Congressman Darrell Issa, Orange County Register, 9-20-15**

California has always prided itself on setting an example for the nation. From its early Gold Rush days, through the rise of its tech industry and the Silicon Valley, the Golden State has repeatedly positioned itself on the cutting edge of the next significant undertaking in American society.

Today, unfortunately, California's lack of preparedness for this multiyear drought is an example of what happens when the state's historic boldness and ingenuity take a backseat to a radical political ideology.

How could such an industrious and forward-thinking state – which is also the world's eighth-largest economy – ever allow itself to get in this position?

In the 1970s, the environmentalist movement began to take shape in the United States. Many California lawmakers and the state's youthful first-term governor, Jerry Brown, embraced the tenets of this movement and set ambitious goals to create a futuristic Golden State in the vein of environmental idealism. While the notion of making California the greenest state in the country at all costs probably seemed as exciting and ambitious to politicians as building a high-speed bullet train to connect San Francisco to Los Angeles, the consequences of environmental extremism have proven to be, at best, problematic and, at worst, detrimental during times of crisis.

Lawmakers could have never prevented a drought from occurring. However, they could have prevented a crisis from ensuing.

The current drought facing California has developed into a crisis because the political motivations of lawmakers over the past 40 years sided with environmental extremism over pragmatic foresight more often than not. Despite having the ability to preserve and expand infrastructure that would store water attained during the wet years so that it would be available during the dry years, lawmakers chose to put a deliberate halt on such reasonableness.

Despite a century of Californians striving to ensure that all corners of the state were adequately supplied with water and despite the ever-growing population of the state, environmentalists decided to abandon all notions of foresight and preparedness and call for an end to the construction of new dams, reservoirs and other water storage facilities. Even the endurance of a drought in 1977 could not dissuade proponents of this new line of thinking from abandoning such ideals. Rather than seeking out water storage solutions, Gov. Brown called for a 25 percent reduction in personal water use statewide.

Thirty-eight years later, the same Gov. Brown is not just calling for a 25 percent statewide reduction in water usage, but mandating one – the first involuntary statewide water restriction in California's history.

This is not a long-term solution. Now is the time to reverse policies that have put political interests above people.

At the federal level, California Republicans have put forward legislation to address this crisis. In July, the House of Representatives passed the Western Water and American Food Security Act, which aims to make water more readily available to drought-stricken communities through the relaxation of many extreme environmental restrictions that have hindered the maximized use of California's water. The bill also aims to expedite the construction of new dams, by placing a time limit on feasibility studies that can currently last for decades and, to the delight of environmental extremists, prevent dams from ever being constructed.

Those that oppose this solution must do more than hope for rain. California can stop exacerbating the crisis through ill-conceived policies and instead prepare for what is to come by making the people of the state the top priority.

It is time for common sense to prevail and California to reclaim its position on the cutting edge once again.