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Time for Legislature to act on water

State can't afford to let another opportunity go down the drain

By Assemblyman Nathan Fletcher | Posted: Sunday, October 25, 2009 12:00 am

"Water, water, every where, nor any drop to drink." "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"'s most famous line is as true today in San Diego as it was to Coleridge's sailor in 18th century England.

Given California's location between the Sierra Nevada Mountains and the Pacific Ocean, many wonder how it is possible to have a water shortage.

The answer is simple: Our problem isn't a lack of water; it's inadequate water transportation and storage infrastructure. When you consider the fact that seven of every 10 drops of rain that fall in California flow into the Pacific Ocean, it's clear that California has to do a better job capturing the water that falls and then transporting it to drier regions of our state.

Identifying the solution is fairly easy ---- getting it through the politically charged, polarized and parochial Legislature is not.

On Monday, the Legislature will reconvene a special session focused on solving the state's water crisis. This will be the sixth special session called since I was sworn into office less than a year ago. All too often, these sessions result in solutions being delayed, denied or deferred. That cannot be the case this time.

Beyond our basic need for drinking water, water is essential to a healthy economy. It is the foundation for every business and agricultural project in our state. For San Diego to continue to thrive in the global economy and welcome developing industries and new-economy jobs, we need access to a reliable, affordable water supply. In this difficult economic climate, we can't accept any less.

San Diego has led the state in finding regional solutions: We set the standard for conservation efforts; we built our own storage facilities, updated our infrastructure and promoted desalination.

Bottom line, we have done everything in our power to work toward a comprehensive solution. It is now time for the rest of the state to catch up.

The statewide solution must include a workable conveyance system to transport water from north to south, increased storage to capture water in wet years, greater conservation efforts, and repairs to the unstable bay delta region. Only a comprehensive solution ---- with all of these pieces ---- can put an end to 40 years of debating the issue.

The legislature and governor have a chance this week to show that they are committed to putting California first.

It is time to get the job done.

Assemblyman Nathan Fletcher represents the 75th Assembly District and is a member of the Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee and Legislative Water Working Group.