All living things require water to survive; Without water there would be no life. However, the more life there is, the greater the need for water. The problem with this is that there are more people than there is water. Now, this is an important issue throughout the country, but especially here in California. California is not only the most populated state in the nation, but it also serves as the biggest agriculture provider. Being that we are the most populated of any of the fifty states we have over 33 million thirsty people. The big issue is where and how the water is distributed throughout our state. We have to choose between giving more water to northern California for crop growing or southern California because they are more populated. This is important to everyone, from the country farmer to the city businessman. However, this issue is far too big for them to handle amongst themselves. This is where our state government steps in. We the people elect politicians to represent us and to address important issues that we are facing. Each political party has their own view on the water issues. In this essay we will be discussing the water issues facing our state and comparing and contrasting some of the political parties and their platforms addressing the California water crisis.

California has been battling a water crisis since it gained its statehood. However, it wasn't always about a shortage of water, it was actually the exact opposite of that. The battle began in the 1800's in the Central Valley, from Redding to Bakersfield, when the valley would flood in the winter time. So, people finally realized that the only
way to control the flooding was to build dams on the major rivers coming out of the Sierra Nevada's. In building these dams they were not only able to control the water but benefit the farmers by allowing them to have more water to irrigate with. This made it possible for people to live in the valley without the fear of being flooded. As the state became more populated the problem of water control became an ongoing battle between the environmentalists, agriculture, and business interests. As a result of these battles between these interest groups it turned into a big political problem within the state legislature (Tokita, Joyce. 150 years of California water history; 2001.)

In 1937 the Federal government began the Central Valley Project, which was to provide up to 4 million acre feet of water per year, mainly to agriculture. However, in later years there was a rapid growth in urban areas, requiring more water. So, in 1992, Congress passed the Central Valley Project Improvement Act, which requires 800,000 acre feet to be dedicated for environmental use. The CVP, (Central Valley Project) provides about 77 million acre feet to California. Over 20% of the state's developed water. (150 years of California water history;) The disagreements now are mainly between the environmentalists and agriculture in the state.

Today, the critical governmental issue for most of the West remains the supply, allocation, transportation and the use of water. For California, like most of the West, the water is generally available in places where there are no people. Most Californians live in the deserts basin and along the coasts in the Southwest corner of the state. Water, on the other hand, is available in the interior Sacramento-San Joaquin River systems and the Northeastern part of the Sierra Nevada range. Except during drought years, enough
precipitation falls on California to satisfy the state's water demands. However, two-thirds of the precipitation falls north of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, primarily during winter and spring, and two-thirds of California's water demand occurs in arid areas south of the Delta, primarily during summer and autumn. Although the supply of water is limited, California remains subject to cycles of drought and floods.

(Valez, Maria; Water water -western issues; 2001)

The 1987-92 drought was notable for its six-year duration and the statewide nature of its impacts. Statewide reservoir storage was about 40 percent of average by the third year of the drought and did not return to average conditions until 1994. The Central Valley Project and State Water Project met their contractors' delivery requests during the first four years of the drought, but then were forced by declining reservoir storage to reduce deliveries substantially. The SWP (State Water Project), terminated deliveries to agricultural contractors and provided only 30 percent of requested urban deliveries in 1991, the single driest year of the drought.

(Learning from California five year drought; 2001)

California's population has increased by more than 6 million people since the beginning of the last drought. There have been significant changes in California's water management framework. For example, California water users are now preparing a plan and negotiating associated agreements to reduce use of Colorado River water to California's basic apportionment in years when surplus water is not available. Other changes affect the ability of the CVP, and the SWP to export water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta. These changes included the new State Water
Resources Control Board Bay-Delta water rights decision, Central Valley Improvement Act, Endangered Species Act listing five new fish species, and management of water operations through the CALFED Operations Group. (Executive Summary;2001)

New regional water management facilities constructed since the drought include the Department's Coastal Aqueduct, Mojave Water Agency's Mojave River and Morongo Basin Pipelines, Metropolitan Water District's Diamond Valley Lake, and Contra Costa Water District's Los Vaqueros Reservoir. Five new large-scale groundwater recharge/storage projects have gone into operation; several others are in advance planning stages. (Executive Summary;2001)

Another way we can get water is by diverting it from nearby lakes and rivers. Although, even with that there are problems because we have to deal with environmental extremists for animal rights, because we are taking water from the animals natural habitats, endangering species and disturbing their environment. The environmentalists answer to the water problem is to take water away from agriculture and divert it to fish and wildlife (Shearer, William K. California Statesman's Legislative Survey;2001).

California streams have been added to the protective system, so now over 1,900 miles of California rivers are placed beyond the reach of water development by federal and or state agencies. In addition, state agencies have identified 202 additional river segments, totaling more than 2,200 miles as eligible for wild and scenic designation. (Executive Summary;Oct.14,2001)

In 1982, environmental concerns helped defeat measures to build a "peripheral canal" to transfer water from northern California to southern California and to build new
dams, such as the proposed Auburn Dam in northern California. Environmental concerns have also affected the operations of dams requiring the maintenance of stream flows critical to the Sacramento, San Joaquin and San Francisco Bay. (Water Western Issues). These environmental requirements restrict the water for consumptive uses. So, even when we find new sources of water we may not be able to use them because of the Environmental Protection Agency.

In 1994, Governor Pete Wilson and Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt signed the Bay Delta Accord. The Accord authorized the creation of CALFED, a federal state task force assigned to develop a long-term water supply plan for California, as well as to address environmental problems in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay Delta. The Bay Delta is the nation's largest estuary system, and it provides two-thirds of the state's drinking water; irrigates most of the Central Valley, and supports more than 750 species of fish, animals, and birds, as well as 40,000 acres of wetlands. Finally, in 1999 CALFED was created in an attempt to secure consensus among environmentalists, farmers and government on a $10 billion, 30 year solution to the environmental problems of the Bay-Delta areas. (150 years of California's water history) In June of 2001, Governor Davis announced $54.8 million in grants and loans to help secure California through the CALFED Bay Delta Program (Governor Davis announces $54.8 million in project to address California's water need). We, the citizens, with the help of the media, have a bigger effect on our politicians than we may realize. Within the last year or so farmers, food processors and others in agriculture have been clamoring for the state to expand its reservoirs and
develop new water facilities. California's last major dam- New Melones on the Stanislaus River- was built in 1979. Since the construction of the New Melones Dam, the state's population has grown from 23.7 million in 1980 to 33.9 million in 2000, an increase of 43 percent. This has put a lot of pressure on Democratic Governor Gray Davis to do something about this. Davis recently has written a letter to legislators, stating that his priorities are to increase storage capacity in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, Lake Shasta, Los Vaqueros Reservoir, and other projects that use surface and groundwater supplies (Modesto Bee; Ag industry praises Davis' support of water projects. October 13, 2001).

The American Independent Party may not be as large as the two majority parties but they are very much concerned about the water issues in our state. They support the full development for beneficial uses of the water resources of the nation and the state of California. They encourage the construction of dams to produce smog-free hydroelectric power, as well as to provide flood control, water supply systems, irrigation and recreation. At the federal level, they support the transferring of all intrastate water projects to the host state; limitation of Federal authority to regulate water rights; pricing of water from Federal projects to provide the lowest reasonable rates to agricultural users; and expanded experimentation programs in the field of salt water conversion, including the use of nuclear energy, in an effort to reduce the cost of such processes. At the State level, they recognize the imperative need for development of additional water resources in view of the loss to Arizona of a substantial portion of California's water supply from the Colorado River. The State Water Project cannot now deliver all of the
water for which it has contracted with local agencies. By 2020, without improved water management and additional facilities, annual shortages of 3.7 to 5.7 million acre feet could occur in average water years, with even greater shortages on drought years. Therefore, the American Independent party supports continued development and implementation of the State Water Project; Expanded programs in such areas as sea water conversion and waste water reclamation; State assistance to individuals and communities ravaged by floods; and Locally initiated and implemented conservation programs. Their party opposes proposed laws which seek to restrict the transfer of surplus water from areas of abundance to areas of deficiency for the beneficial use of the people in the water-deficient portions of California; Seek to force present and potential agricultural land out of production by means of arbitrary and unreasonable regulation, or direct water reserved for agricultural use to so-called environmental purposes; and which misdirect the concept of conservation to impose unreasonable limitations on water use, expand government regulation of individual citizens, destroy the quality of life for many Californians, tear down dams which provide existing water supplies, and increase the cost of water to the consumer while prohibiting the development of projects which would increase the available water supply. The American Party is running a candidate to implement these policies. (American Independent party's platform on water issues)

Another one of the smaller political parties is the Libertarians. The Libertarian's Party platform is, "private ownership and property rights." The party is very aware of the California water crisis and proved this by discussing the Truck Convoy Protest taking place in northern California. It seems that the farmers in that area do not have access to
their local dam due to government restriction. As a result, crops are ruining because they do not have enough water. The Libertarians feel that there should be NO government access to our water supply. The party states that there is 40-60% less water in the valley due to government involvement. They would like to see the "people" of this country taking over the water issue, not the government. The Libertarian Party like the American Independent Party, is also very much for agricultural because they understand that farmers need it in order to feed the rest of the state. They are trying to help with the California water crisis by getting the message out that we need less government restriction on how farmers use their resources, therefore giving priority to agriculture.

The Republican Party, the second largest party in this state, support and encourage efforts to protect and promote the availability of water for agriculture. They support clear civil remedies rather than arbitrary bureaucratic rules to protect all natural resources. They believe water is best protected by extending and enforcing private property rights, rather than by regulation. They oppose land confiscation and controls that deprive individuals of basic property or water rights. They stand firmly in opposition to uncompensated taking or condemnation of private land, water or property rights by government for public use. Basically, if your property has a stream running through it, they do not believe in building a dam and blocking it or taking that water and putting it to public use. (Republican party headquarters; Platform on water issues)

The Democratic Party, the largest in California, only supports agriculture that conserves water. They really do not support agriculture as much as they support environmentalist issues. They are more into saving the environment and keeping our
water, that we do have, clean rather than trying to figure out where we are going to get more water from. In terms of helping with the state's water crisis, the Democratic Party wants to develop incentives that encourage farmers to use conservation farming techniques to save the little water they plan on allocating them. The people that we spoke with didn't really acknowledge a great shortage of water, therefore really didn't have a plan on how to solve it, or where to get more water from. They didn't really play an important role in this crisis.

We also tried to contact the Natural Law and Reform Parties to get their parties platform as well, however received no response from either of the two. We got a hold of the Green Party, but they said they were not focusing on the water issues at this time and did not want to take time to speak with us.

To sum up what we did find from the parties that were kind enough to speak with us is that the majority of the parties were supporters of agricultural use of the water in our state. The Democratic party was the only one that was more concerned with the environmental issues, rather than water shortage. However, Democratic Governor Davis has been addressing this issue a lot more lately after pressure from the agriculture industry.

The water issues in the West will continue to be driven by water scarcity, population growth, and environmental concerns. There is no single solution, but a series of accommodations and actions that communities will need to take in the decades to come. Here, regulatory leadership is less likely to produce an answer to this issue, than a process for resolving the most pressing issues at anyone time. Hopefully, political parties
can share their views together to form some solid solutions to these water concerns that are facing our state.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY


