



Garamendi set to “brawl” over tunnels appropriation bill

Published May 15, 2018 at WintersExpress.com

A Republican lawmaker’s proposal to ban legal challenges to the controversial Delta twin tunnels project would prevent citizens from having their voices heard in court on important environmental issues, Rep. John Garamendi, D-Solano, told the Winters Express in a telephone interview on Monday.

On Monday, Rep. Ken Calvert, R-Corona, introduced a 142-page appropriations bill that would establish the budget for the Department of Interior and other agencies within the federal government. Buried in the bill on the second-to-last page was a proposal that would prevent agency decisions regarding the Delta twin tunnels project from being challenged in court.

“It would be a crime if these things were built,” Garamendi said. “Here, we see raw political power exerted from Southern California in a way that would deny opponents to the tunnels one of the most-basic American rights, and that is the right to go to court.”

Garamendi said Calvert’s move to ban court challenges on the topic is entirely legal because any challenge brought in court would be based on current environmental laws, including the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act. “Another law can take away that ability to seek justice in court,” he said.

Garamendi said the move would prompt an all-out “brawl” when the House of Representatives held session later in the day.

“He knows I am going to be looking for him,” Garamendi said. “And I’m not alone. The group that we call Team Delta...are going to be seeking an opportunity to talk with Mr. Calvert.”

Garamendi represents California’s 3rd congressional district which includes the city of Winters.

In a statement supplied to the Winters Express, Calvert said citizens have had more than enough time to voice their concerns to the twin tunnels project, which he asserted already faced a significant amount of public scrutiny.

“After more than a decade of studies and more than 50,000 pages of environmental documents, all of the project’s stakeholders have had a plethora of opportunities to express their thoughts and concerns,” Calvert said. “The tough decisions about the [project] have been made by Gov. Brown, Democrat and Republican legislators, and a host of water officials, and now we must move forward with the project.”

The proposed twin tunnels project would divert water from the Sacramento River for use in other parts of the state. Proponents of the plan say the tunnels would provide much-needed water supplies to agricultural areas of the Central Valley and urban portions of the San Francisco Bay Area and Southern California. Opponents say the tunnels come at an exorbitant financial cost and could have significant damaging impacts on the environment.