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The man-made drought in California is no secret. Burdensome environmental regulations restricting water pumping in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta have contributed to hundreds of thousands of acres of fertile farmland going fallow in recent years.

During California's 2007-2009 drought, the Democratic majority and the Obama administration stood on the sidelines while farmers were forced to forgo planting, joblessness rose and families stood in food lines. It was a huge relief last year when we had abundant rain and snow, but instead of using 100 percent of that water for farming and storage, millions of acre-feet of water were allowed to be lost into the ocean.

This year is looking to be as dry as they come, and without adequate storage, we will continue to see the problem of water shortages year after year. We must act now to ensure that our communities get every drop of water possible to grow the crops that feed America and create the jobs that support families and local economies.

The U.S. House of Representatives did just that on Feb. 29 by passing the Sacramento-San Joaquin Valley Water Reliability Act. If enacted, this bill will get water flowing in California and increase water storage for future years. Right now, water traveling through the delta has been reduced from a gush to a trickle because environmentalists care more about protecting fish than putting Californians back to work. Protecting ecosystems is important, but so are the crops that help feed America and produce jobs that promote economic recovery in our state. This bill takes the zealotry out of these environmental restrictions and puts California's water delivery system on more balanced and reliable footing.

In this bill, we return pumping operations to the bipartisan 1994 Bay Delta Accord. As many probably remember, this accord was hailed as an end to California's water wars and was roundly praised. The Clinton administration and other prominent Democrats such as Rep. George Miller, D-Martinez, and Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt lent their support, as did Republican Gov. Pete Wilson, environmentalists and water users in both the Northern and Southern parts of the state. This was a good deal for everyone - and that's why we used it for the base of our bill.

By returning water pumping to the previously agreed-upon levels in the 1994 accord, Central Valley families and farmers will see an estimated increase of 1.4 million acre-feet of water.

That's enough to irrigate 460,000 acres of farmland or provide drinking water to more than 1 million households for one year. It's also enough to create up to 30,000 agricultural jobs in the valley, according to economic impact studies. All told, this is legislation that will put people back to work, ensure a more reliable water supply to California farmers, and generate revenue for the federal government. Unlike the Obama administration's failed economic stimulus, this bill will create jobs at no cost to the taxpayer. In fact, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that it will bring in an estimated \$221 million by allowing water contractors to prepay for their water.

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Valley Water Reliability Act is smart legislation that will have positive impacts not just for California families, farmers and small businesses, but for all of America as well. We can no longer allow a fish to be prioritized above our families and food supply. We have to get our priorities right. This bill does that, and we look forward to the Senate taking it up and joining us in putting an end to California's man-made water crisis.