



Opposition Deepening Against Governor's Proposal to Fast-Track Delta Tunnel Project in Budget

PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACTS: Robert Gammon, Senator McNerney, Robert.Gammon@sen.ca.gov
Edgar Guerra, Assemblymember Wilson, Edgar.Guerra@asm.ca.gov

Opposition to Governor Gavin Newsom's proposal to fast-track the costly and destructive Delta Tunnel Project via the state budget is deepening. The broad bipartisan coalition against the tunnel fast-tracking plan now includes more than 100 legislators; cities, counties, and public agencies; good government groups; environmental and tribal organizations; and nonprofits and local businesses.

In addition, [a recent report](#) from California's independent Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) raised serious red flags about the tunnel fast-tracking proposal and urged the Legislature to pause the governor's plan to provide lawmakers with more time to examine the proposal's wide-ranging impacts.

"The deepening opposition to the tunnel fast-tracking plan strongly demonstrates that the Legislature should reject this proposal," said Sen. Jerry McNerney, D-Pleasanton, co-chair of the California Legislative Delta Caucus. "The Delta water tunnel will cost at least \$20-plus billion — and likely much more — and will destroy 4,000 acres of prime farmland in the fragile Delta, along with salmon fisheries and tribal resources. Plus, the tunnel's unaffordable costs would have to be shouldered by ratepayers who are already overburdened by skyrocketing utility bills."

"The growing opposition to the governor's Delta Tunnel proposal is impossible to ignore, with organizations from across California standing together in solidarity. This isn't a partisan issue. It's not North versus South. It reflects real, statewide concern rooted in environmental justice, public accountability, fiscal responsibility, and the protection of our communities," said Assemblywoman Lori D. Wilson, D-Suisun City, co-chair of the Delta Caucus. "We're talking about a \$20-plus billion boondoggle being pushed through a budget trailer bill that bypasses the legislative process, silences impacted communities, and places the burden on California's ratepayers and taxpayers. Groups ranging from conservationists and tribal leaders to local governments and fishing advocates understand what's at stake — the health of the Delta, the integrity of our democracy, and the future of responsible water management in California. As co-chair of the Delta Caucus, I stand with this broad coalition and urge our colleagues in the Legislature to reject this deeply flawed proposal. We've stopped it before, and we can do it again."

Among the most recent opposition to the governor's fast-tracking plan is the conservative Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association. In an [opposition letter](#), HJTA wrote that the fast-tracking proposal would "undermine" the important and independent role that courts have "in our constitutional structure as both a check on government and protector of fundamental rights."

The fast-tracking proposal would bypass environmental and judicial reviews of the tunnel project and allow the California Department of Water Resources to issue whatever massive amount of bond debt is required to pay for the tunnel, which is currently estimated to cost at least \$20 billion.

The Delta Caucus and the coalition against the fast-tracking plan are calling on the Legislature to reject it. At minimum, the coalition agrees with the LAO recommendation to table the plan to provide adequate time for lawmakers to fully analyze and debate it.

According to the LAO, the governor's proposal raises numerous policy concerns, including:

- **Eminent Domain Expansion:** Makes it easier for the state to seize private land.
- **Weakened Oversight:** Exempts key permits from deadlines and enforcement, undermining checks and balances.
- **Silenced Opposition:** Reduces the ability of under-resourced communities to protest or challenge permits, undermining years of work in the Legislature to advance equity in state legal and regulatory proceedings.
- **Legal Shortcuts:** Limits court oversight and fast-tracks legal proceedings to avoid delays.
- **Permanent Water Rights:** Exempts water rights permits from construction and beneficial use timelines that normally prevent permanent monopolization of water.
- **Financial Burden:** Allows tunnel costs to be unlimited and passed on to ratepayers through revenue bonds. Additional ratepayer costs will be a regressive tax on Southern California residents.

"The LAO's report confirms what we've been saying all along: this is a dangerous attempt to push a deeply flawed project through the back door," said Sacramento County Supervisor Pat Hume, chair of the Delta Counties Coalition. "This tunnel offers no new water, costs billions, and jeopardizes the largest freshwater estuary in the Western U.S. It's fiscally reckless and environmentally disastrous."

As of Wednesday, a bipartisan group of more than 20 state legislators, including all members of the Delta Caucus, have signed [a letter of opposition](#) to the tunnel fast-tracking plan. U.S. Representatives Mike Thompson, John Garamendi, Mark DeSaulnier, Josh Harder, and Doris Matsui [are also in opposition](#).

In addition, the Delta Counties Coalition, which includes the five counties of the Delta region: Contra Costa, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano, and Yolo, have authored [an opposition letter](#).

Also, the following Delta cities are officially opposed: Stockton, Lathrop, Lodi, Manteca, Mountain House, Ripon, Elk Grove, Oakley, and West Sacramento.

The opposition coalition also includes more than [40 environmental groups and indigenous tribes](#), plus more than [20 nonprofits and local businesses](#).

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