

Opinion: Calif. working on water bond

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

With the state budget behind them, the Capitol's politicians are turning to water, always California's most divisive political issue – but particularly so during a very severe drought, as a state Senate debate and vote demonstrated last week.



Dan Walters

They are trying – some harder than others – to write a new water bond to replace an \$11.1 billion proposal placed on the ballot in 2009 but already postponed twice and widely believed to face voter rejection.

Six would-be successors are floating around the Capitol while private negotiations among politicians and myriad stakeholders seek a magic mix that could win two-thirds legislative votes and stand a decent chance of voter approval.

A \$10.5 billion version stalled Monday in the Senate, falling five votes short as Republicans refused to vote for it. Anticipating the outcome, Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg said during the debate, “It’s not a loss. It’s the beginning ... of successful negotiations.”

Gov. Jerry Brown, seeking re-election as a debt-reduction

zealot, has been clearly reluctant to have any debt-increasing bond on the ballot, either for water or schools.

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