

Can Congress pass a California water bill?

By Michael Doyle, Sacramento Bee

California's two Democratic senators remain somewhat out of sync over proposed water legislation, underscoring its ambiguous future on the eve of a big hearing.

Four months after Sen. Dianne Feinstein's introduction of her latest California water package, Sen. Barbara Boxer is still evaluating the 185-page bill. Her wait-and-see attitude hints at complex undercurrents, as she supports some parts of Feinstein's bill while seeking more feedback about other parts.

"I think many of us feel the same way as Sen. Boxer," said Rep. Jared Huffman, D-San Rafael. "We appreciate that Sen. Feinstein has reached out and taken some new ideas that she's rolled into that bill . . . but it still contains this very problematic Delta operations piece."

Feinstein's legislation will be one of five Western water bills considered today by the Senate Water and Power Subcommittee. It's the first Senate hearing since last October on a drought-inspired California water bill.

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