

Calif. safe drinking water tax proposed

By Katy Murphy, Bay Area News Group

For the first time Californians would pay a tax on drinking water – 95 cents per month – under legislation aimed at fixing hundreds of public water systems with unsafe tap water.

Senate Bill 623, backed by a strange-bedfellows coalition of the agricultural lobby and environmental groups but opposed by water districts, would generate \$2 billion over the next 15 years to clean up contaminated groundwater and improve faulty water systems and wells. The problem is most pervasive in rural areas with agricultural runoff.

Ironically, many Californians are more aware of the crisis in Flint – where state and local officials in 2015 told residents about lead contamination in the drinking water, after claiming it was safe to drink – than about the water problems in their home state, said the measure's main author, Sen. Bill Monning, D-Monterey.

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