



Regional Water Authority
BUILDING ALLIANCES IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

2020 | **Advocacy Program Highlights**

Staying Nimble During Extraordinary Times



2020 was a year of unprecedented challenges, not only for the essential work of water providers, but for almost all aspects of our daily lives. The year's new rules of engagement created by the COVID-19 pandemic of social distancing, shelter-in-place orders, and working from home, have devastated our economy, and delayed critical infrastructure funding.

After approving \$1.1 billion in new funding to help the state cope with the coronavirus pandemic, the California state legislature adjourned for an emergency recess on March 16, 2020, disrupting the typical legislative calendar, as well as the state budget process. Prior to the pandemic, the Governor's January budget and several legislative proposals included a multi-billion-dollar bond for the November 2020 ballot to support climate resiliency. However, due to COVID-19, funding and legislative items not related to the pandemic were shelved.

This was a blow to our efforts to advance much-needed funding for initiatives such as the Sacramento Regional Water Bank, among other projects. Despite that setback, RWA members still received \$8.75 million in state grants and eligibility for nearly \$1 million in federal funds. We plan to build on that success moving forward. Additionally, just as everyone was forced to do, RWA pivoted quickly in light of the state's rapidly changing legislative and economic conditions and moved to identify shovel-ready projects that create jobs in preparation for when federal stimulus and/ or modified state stimulus funds become available.

If there is a silver lining to this horrific year, it has to be that our "new normal" has afforded us the opportunity to slow down and reflect deeply on what is most important to us as individuals, to the organizations we lead, and to the communities we serve. We have worked very closely with our partners and customers to ensure everyone's safety during this trying time.

We look forward to continuing our regional collaborative efforts and refocusing on our efforts to gain funding for critical infrastructure projects.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Ryan Ojakian'.

Ryan Ojakian

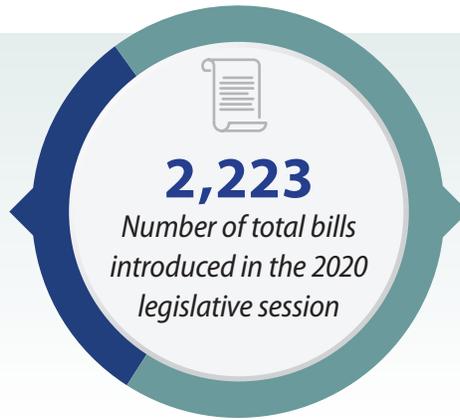
Legislative and Regulatory Affairs Manager

By the Numbers

Note: The numbers below reflect legislation introduced prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift in focus to bills related to addressing the pandemic.

682 in the Senate

- 246 of those bills passed the Senate
- 137 bills made it to the Governor’s desk
 - 117 bills were signed into law
 - 20 bills were vetoed



1,541 in the Assembly

- 430 bills passed the Assembly
- 291 bills made it to the Governor’s desk
 - 255 bills were signed into law
 - 36 bills were vetoed

80 bills that could impact RWA member agencies

21 HOT list bills with RWA positions

- 4 support bills chaptered
- 4 bills RWA stayed neutral that were chaptered
- 5 support bills that died on the Floor
- 1 bills RWA stayed neutral that were vetoed
- 2 oppose bills that died on the Floor
- 5 bills RWA stayed neutral that died on the Floor

FINAL LEGISLATIVE OUTCOME ON RWA “HOT LIST” BILLS IN 2020

A full analysis and text of all top priority bills are available on the RWA website at rwah2o.org.

Bill – Author	Bill Title & Description	RWA Position
AB 196 – Gonzalez	Workers Compensation: COVID-19: essential occupations and industries	Oppose – Died
AB 609 – Levine	California Environmental Quality Act: notices and documents: electronic filing and posting	Support – Died
AB 685 – Reyes	COVID-19: imminent hazard to employees; exposure: notification: serious violations	Neutral – Chaptered
AB 2296 – Quirk	State Water Resources Control Board – local primacy delegation: funding stabilization	Neutral – Vetoed
AB 2371 – Friedman	Climate Change: Office of Planning and Research: science advisory team: climate adaptation and hazard mitigation	Neutral – Died
AB 2560 – Quirk	Water quality: notification levels and response levels: procedures	Support – Chaptered
AB 2621 – Mullin	Office of Planning and Research: regional climate networks: climate networks: climate adaptation action plans	Support – Died
AB 3030 – Kalra	Resource conservation: land and ocean conservation goals	Oppose – Died
AB 3226 – McCarty	Flood protection: West Sacramento flood risk reduction project: maintenance area	Support – Died

AB 3256 – Garcia	Economic Recovery, Wildfire Prevention, Safe Drinking Water, Drought Preparation and Flood Protection Bond Act of 2020	Neutral – Died
AB 3279 – Friedman	California Environmental Quality Act: administrative and judicial procedures	Support – Died
SB 45 – Allen	Wildfire Prevention, Safe Drinking Water, Drought Preparation, and Flood Protection Bond Act of 2020	Neutral – Died
SB 414 – Calello	Small System Water Authority Act of 2019	Support – Died
SB 865 – Hill	Excavations: subsurface installations	Neutral – Chaptered
SB 974 – Hurtado	California Environmental Quality Act: small disadvantaged community water system: state small water system: exemption	Support – Chaptered
SB 1044 – Allen	Firefighting equipment and foam: PFAS chemicals	Support – Chaptered
SB 1099 – Dodd	Emergency backup generators: critical facilities: exemptions	Neutral – Died
SB 1159 – Hill	Worker's compensation: COVID-19: critical workers	Neutral – Chaptered
SB 1185 – Moorlach	Emergency backup generators: operation during de-energization events	Neutral – Died
SB 1320 – Stern	Climate change: California Climate Change Assessment	Neutral – Chaptered
SB 1386 – Moorlach	Local government: assessments, fees and charges: water: hydrants	Support – Chaptered

RWA Launches New Federal Affairs Advocacy Effort

The RWA Board in March 2020 adopted a new Federal Affairs platform and, with it, a new focus on influencing federal legislation and attracting federal funding for local water projects and initiatives.

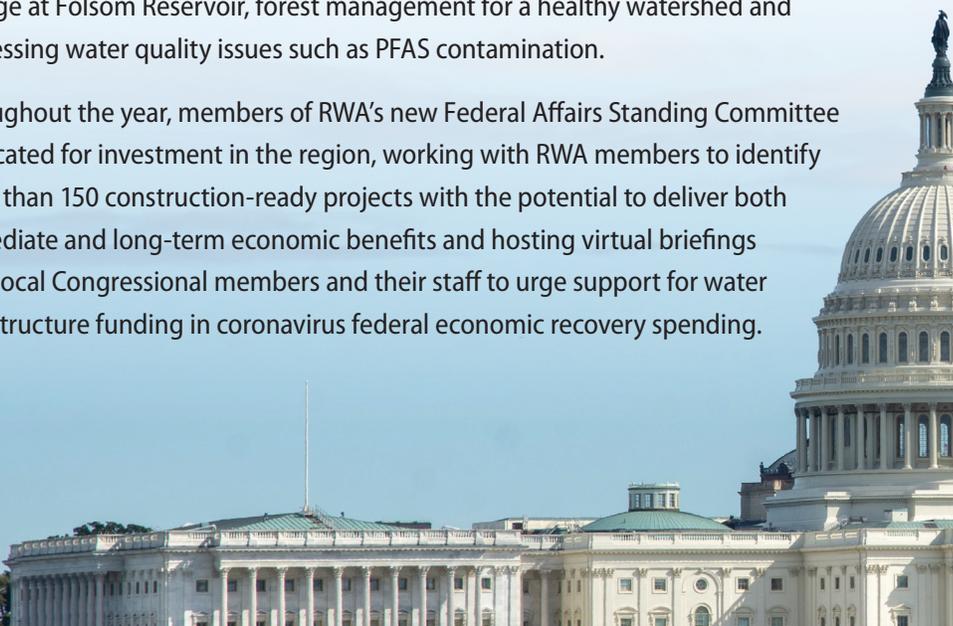
The platform outlined RWA's focus on adapting to the projected impacts of climate change and building resiliency through the Sacramento Regional Water Bank, RiverArc, habitat improvement projects on the Lower American River, cold water storage at Folsom Reservoir, forest management for a healthy watershed and addressing water quality issues such as PFAS contamination.

Throughout the year, members of RWA's new Federal Affairs Standing Committee advocated for investment in the region, working with RWA members to identify more than 150 construction-ready projects with the potential to deliver both immediate and long-term economic benefits and hosting virtual briefings with local Congressional members and their staff to urge support for water infrastructure funding in coronavirus federal economic recovery spending.



Our region has long been preparing to address the impacts from climate change on our water resources at a watershed scale. We believe the water resilience portfolio findings are fully aligned with the solutions we have been developing. The region's climate adaptation portfolio re-imagines how water should be managed in the face of a less reliable water supply and a greater flood threat that is expected from reduced snowpack and flashier rainstorms in a narrower wet season. While these challenges are real and daunting, we know our holistic approach will solve them.

RWA and SGA Executive Director Jim Peifer as quoted in a joint media statement with the Water Forum and Sacramento Area Flood Control District



LOOKING FORWARD

2021 & Beyond

In 2020, the advocacy season started with the much-anticipated release of Governor Gavin Newsom's draft Water Resilience Portfolio, which includes more than 100 recommended actions to help California cope with more extreme droughts and floods, rising temperatures, declining fish populations, aging infrastructure, and other challenges.

Before funding for this effort was derailed by historic circumstances, the RWA worked to shape the portfolio in comments that focused on prioritizing the portfolio's recommendations, enhancing communication between regulators and water agencies, and investing in source watersheds as a means to adapt to the predicted loss of snowpack, which will disrupt water supply reliability statewide. We also reinforced our decades-long commitment to environmental resilience through the Water Forum agreement.

As we look ahead to 2021, we look forward to again being able to give our full attention to shaping and securing funding for the recommendations in the Governor's Water Resilience Portfolio that improve the ability of the Sacramento region and state to adapt to climate change.

The cutting-edge American River Basin Study (ARBS) reinforces the region's holistic watershed approach and will pave the way

for outreach to demonstrate the logic of the state investing in the American River watershed to yield the greatest benefit not only for local water supplies and the environment but also potentially for statewide benefits.

The region's comprehensive approach—the WaterFuture initiative—connects surface



water planning, groundwater planning, and environmental stewardship to improve resilience to flood, fire, and drought. The advocacy team will be dedicated to making sure the Legislature and the Governor understand this, see the value and benefit in this plan, and prioritize funding for the region.

While looking long-term, we will also continue to shape legislation and regulation resulting from the coronavirus emergency. The longer the COVID-19 pandemic continues, making up lost revenue becomes more complicated for the public water community. Our team will work to educate key influencers about the extraordinary circumstances faced by water utilities of increasing costs to meet needs and falling revenues, as water utilities continue to keep the water flowing for all ratepayers during this public health crisis.

STAFF

For any questions or more information, please contact RWA Advocacy Program Manager Ryan Ojikian at (916) 967-7692.

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