



# The Sacramento Bee

## OPINION

### Flash flood

#### Hurried House must get details right

**T**he House of Representatives has set in motion a fast and furious process for deciding on 100 flood-control projects throughout the nation — and the water supply dreams of a single member, Rocklin's Rep. John Doolittle. With no public testimony and with only a day to review the proposed legislation passed through its subcommittee, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee today must carefully navigate through some confusing waters if it is to advance a solid bill for the full House to consider as soon as next week.

The whirlwind pace of the bill is a welcome effort to break a political gridlock surrounding Sacramento, where Doolittle for months has sought local efforts to double the flood protection of America's most threatened big-river city. The haste, however, raises the worrisome possibility of serious mistakes.

**T**hat scenario seems all too real based on a highly partisan subcommittee meeting Wednesday. The subcommittee, on an encouraging note, passed a reasonable flood-control package for Sacramento. Of growing concern, however, was the way Democrats and Republicans disagreed as to whether Doolittle's water supply projects attached to the bill would affect water rights throughout Northern California.

In essence, Doolittle seeks funds to establish a series of new pumps to extract tens of thousands of acre-feet of water from the American and Sacramento rivers as a substitute for delivering water from an Auburn dam, a pet Doolittle project that Congress repeatedly has rejected. Such pumps, if sized and located correctly after a long, careful, consensus-based decision-making process, could prove helpful to the region. But approving oversized pumps in legislation rammed through Congress, on the other hand, would destabilize the region. Impacts may reach far downstream in the San Joaquin Valley if Doolittle's big pumps entice upstream counties to claim rights to water that now goes to valley farms.

**T**he questions about these pump projects are as legitimate as they are complex and should be of particular concern to Central Valley Republicans such as Reps. George Radanovich and Bill Thomas. The House committee should realize that in California consensus-based advances in water policy happen in the light of day, not in the dark of the Washington night, and that successful compromises come at a painfully slow pace. None of these water questions should prevent flood projects for Sacramento and other at-risk communities from advancing. The process is at a critical stage today. Let's hope our leaders respond accordingly.