**The latest on California politics and government**

**April 3, 2012**

[Lawmakers challenge Army Corps on California levees](http://blogs.sacbee.com/capitolalertlatest/2012/04/lawmakers-challenge-army-corps-on-california-levees.html)

Leave it to something like levee vegetation to unite [California](http://topics.sacbee.com/California/) lawmakers.

On Tuesday, in the latest round of a long-running flood-control dispute, Rep. [**Doris Matsui**](http://topics.sacbee.com/Doris+Matsui/), D-Sacramento, and 34 other House members from [California](http://topics.sacbee.com/California/) urged the [Army Corps](http://topics.sacbee.com/Army+Corps/) of Engineers to revise its policies governing vegetation on levees. The lawmakers, mostly Democrats but with a few Republicans like Rep. [**Dan Lungren**](http://topics.sacbee.com/Dan+Lungren/), [D-Gold River,](http://topics.sacbee.com/D-Gold+River/) joining in, warned the Corps against what they call the "extremely high costs of levee construction and mitigation" entailed by a strict no-vegetation rule.

The stakes are high, as [California officials](http://www.water.ca.gov/floodsafe/leveeveg/levee_documents/2010-0415_DWRLetter_and_attachment.pdf) have identified more than 2,100 miles of levees in the [Central Valley.](http://topics.sacbee.com/Central+Valley/)

The Californian lawmakers said they agree that new levees should be "constructed and maintained in full compliance with Corps vegetation policies" but called for a "a regionally adaptable approach" that permits woody vegetation on existing levees.

The corps believes vegetation can undermine the stability of levees, although a [study](http://wri.usace.army.mil/woody_vegetation_research.html) released last year asserted that vegetation at the base of levees can actually be beneficial.

**Related story**: [Corps' policy on levee trees holds -- for now](http://www.sacbee.com/2011/09/09/3895728/us-army-corps-of-engineers-keeps.html#storylink=misearch)

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