

Kawamura: Agriculture should not be divided on political lines

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domination of the state, but that would continue with three states and the people in power running the state won't want to give up that power, Fowle said.

"We would end up with three states voting like California," he said. "It's better to have one evil stepchild than adding two more."

"I think the underlying idea behind it is to gain more left-leaning power in the federal government," he said. "It doesn't serve the center-right."

Lack of vision

Kawamura said California has the fifth- or sixth-largest overall and agricultural economies in the world. It could be even more successful, he said, if it had a vision of where it is going. That won't be attainable if the state splits into three, he said.

Kawamura said he sees no benefit to agriculture from a split and that it would not give more clout to areas that now feel powerless. Certain areas of agriculture could potentially be more isolated than they are now and the three states may end up fighting for resources, revenue and federal assistance, he said.

"Each region is potentially harmed and diminished in ability to align federal and state funding for build-out of a robust 21st century nation and state," Kawamura said.

California is not immune from political shifts, and while it shifted "tremendously to the left over the better part of two decades" it could swing back to the middle, he said.

Agriculture should not be divided on political lines, he said.

"We need to move beyond politics into a 21st century reassessment of what are we trying to accomplish, and does the two-party system help us accomplish it?" Kawamura said. "California has the potential to be stronger economically and agriculturally than it is if it wants to be so. Successful agriculture sustains civilizations."

With nearly 40 million people, California is the most populous state in the nation. It's also first in debt, owing more than \$425 billion. With 155,959 square miles, it is smaller than only Alaska and Texas.

The idea of splitting California isn't new. There have already been more than 200 attempts to divide it into smaller states. The first was the Pico Act in 1859, just nine years after statehood. It was started by Southern Californians who thought tax and land laws were unfair. The proposal attracted pro-slavery



Daniel Jackson, a Reedley, Calif., fruit producer in his blueberry field 60 miles northeast of Los Mochis, Mexico, on April 17. He's expanding in Mexico and Peru because "California has a systemic political problem that's killing agriculture."



Geri Byrne, a rancher and Border Collie trainer near Tulelake, Calif., says rural Modoc County would be even more disenfranchised if the state were split.

southerners and was approved in a Southern California referendum, passed the Legislature and the governor signed it. However, it died in Congress because of the Civil War.

Cal 3 idea

Cal 3 is the second effort by San Francisco Bay area venture capitalist Tim Draper to split the state. He spent \$5.2 million on a 2014 attempt to divide it into six states but did not receive enough voter signatures to put it on the election ballot.

A change in law required far fewer signatures this time, and on April 12 Draper announced he has more than 600,000. The state has to verify 365,880 valid signatures to place his so-called "Cal 3" proposal on the Nov. 6 general election ballot. If approved by voters, it would still need the approval of the state Legislature and Congress.

Draper has said smaller states are more efficient and responsive, would improve government services and ensure each region receives resources. Others say it's policies and spending, not the size of the state, that have led to California's problems and huge debt.

That debt and the state's assets would have to be split among the three new states, which would also set taxes. Population would be split at almost 14 million in the south, 13 million in the north and about 12 million on the coast.

New borders

Northern California would include the San Francisco Bay area, Merced, Sacramento and everything to the north. Agriculturally, it would include the northern half of the San Joaquin Valley, the Sacramento Valley and delta and Napa wine country.

Coastal California would include Los Angeles, Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, Monterey and San Benito counties. Agriculturally, it would include the southern half of the San Joaquin and the Imperial valleys. The San Joaquin split would follow the Mariposa-Madera County line and the Merced-Fresno County line.

Southern California would have the nation's top three counties in agricultural production. Tulare, Fresno and Kern counties have a combined farmgate value of about \$19 billion annually.

Southern California would include Fresno and Bakersfield. Its largest populations would be in San Diego, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

Chance for clout?

Of the three, Southern California appears to be the only one where agricultural and conservative voices may have a chance of winning politically.

In 2016, California voted for Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton over

Republican nominee Donald Trump by 30.1 percentage points. Dividing the vote by the proposed three new states results in Clinton winning by 37 points in the north, 44.1 points in the coast and 9.7 points in the south, according to an analysis by Fox News.

Doonan, the Bishop rancher, doesn't see a lot of hope.

"I'd be part of Southern California. I live in the Southern California economy and what they want is not what I want. I'm not sure Orange County (a more conservative area) can turn things around. Our population is so low out here that we don't have any votes," Doonan said. He's in Inyo County, population 19,000.

"It goes back to educating people what agriculture is about. We are under so much scrutiny now. People think we are damaging the state when we are feeding the state," Doonan said.

Daniel Jackson, 39, co-owner of Family Tree Farms in Reedley, southeast of Fresno, would also be in Southern California. He said he would go for Cal 3 if it would provide even half a chance of gaining political clout. He said he'd like a state with no big cities, and that San Diego has in the past been pro-agriculture but is going the other way.

"Farmers are such a small percentage of the population that we have zero say. Cities have so much more political clout and many people who live there have never set a foot on a farm," Jackson said.

He views the problem as more pro- versus anti-agriculture than liberal versus conservative. State policies are "against the farmer and

resources a farmer needs to make a crop," he said. The state is run by people who know nothing about agriculture, he said.

Jackson's family owns about 4,000 acres mostly in stone fruit in the San Joaquin Valley, but has expanded into growing blueberries on "vast acreages" in Mexico and Peru in the last five years.

"We know California has a time line on its agricultural life and to stay alive we have to be more creative in where we farm," Jackson said. "Right now I'm speaking with you from a taco stand in Mexico. More and more growers are doing this because they know California has a systemic political problem that's killing agriculture. The world needs to know California is choosing to import its food instead of grow its own."

Geri Byrne, 61, a cattle and sheep rancher near Alturas and a Modoc County supervisor in the far northeast corner of the state, said she has always thought California is too big and should be split because rural areas have no representation.

"But this isn't the answer the way the map is drawn," she said.

The rural north is disenfranchised even more with Sacramento and the Bay Area than if the whole state remains together, she said.

Modoc County is rural, conservative and its economy is agriculture, she said. It was second to support the state of Jefferson and voted more than 70 percent for Donald Trump when he ran for president, she said.

"But it's not Republican versus Democrat as much as urban versus rural," Byrne said, "and it's a complete disconnect between the people who consume the food and those who produce it."

A different split

What about a different split, one lumping Sacramento, San Francisco and Los Angeles together and leaving the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys with San Diego and Orange counties?

There would be greater disparities in population and per-capita income than with the three-state plan.

"We export a tremendous amount of agricultural products overseas. There would be heated discussions over reasonable fees and assessments to get products to port," Fowle said.

On the upside, you could ease regulations, create a more business-friendly environment and reduce production costs, he said.

"But by the time that happened, the exodus of agri-

business from California may have reached the point that it would not be recoverable," Fowle said.

Specialty production such as nuts and dairies are under regulatory pressure and looking to leave the state, he said. Dairy has been "unfairly targeted" on air, water, labor and transportation, he said.

Slaughter houses, processors and packers that need upgrades are weighing whether they would be better off shutting down and moving elsewhere, he said.

California needs more water storage but hasn't built any since the 1960s, he said.

"If we can't agree to fast-track water storage," Fowle said, "it tells you the desire isn't there to allow reasonable upgrades for processing, packing and transportation."

More reaction

Ryan Jacobsen, 38, president of the Fresno County Farm Bureau, said he doesn't know much about Cal 3 because it was "under the radar" until Draper's announcement. Draper's motivations aren't clear and a desire for six U.S. Senate seats instead of two may be the driver as much as anything, Jacobsen said. State legislative and gubernatorial power would be diffused, he said.

"It's fair to say the state has become more difficult to farm by the year. It's a continuous move into ignorance as to what agriculture contributes economically and food-wise," Jacobsen said.

Endangered Species Act issues have strangled the water supply and led to large portions of the San Joaquin Valley being removed from agricultural production, he said.

"This year, the Northern California watershed is most likely well above 80 percent of average and yet farmers in the San Joaquin with federal project contracts will only get 20 percent of normal contracted amounts. It's very frustrating," he said.

Marilyn Wright, 56, Tulare County's agricultural commissioner, agreed that there's not enough information about Cal 3 to make an informed opinion.

State water resource and air quality boards govern agriculture pretty heavily and what would happen with them would be key, Wright said. Heavy restrictions from those boards have caused some growers to sell out, she said.

"The population centers are so far removed from agriculture that they don't know where their food comes from or how safely it is grown here in California," she said.

'There are literally fields blowing away with the wind while we wait for water'

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To complicate matters further, the Bureau of Reclamation has yet to announce a start date for irrigation season due to a court injunction aimed at protecting threatened coho salmon from a deadly parasite in the Klamath River.

The parasite, known as C. shasta, infects freshwater worms which, in turn, release spores into the river that infect fish on contact. A coalition of groups and tribes secured an injunction in 2017 that requires the Bureau of Reclamation to keep 50,000 acre-feet of stored water to flush away C. shasta spores until 80 percent of juvenile salmon reach the ocean.

Plaintiffs include the Yurok and Hoopa Valley tribes, along with Klamath Riverkeeper, the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations and Institute for Fisheries Resources. They allege that mismanagement of the Klamath River below four major dams led to an outbreak of C. shasta in more than 90 percent of sampled fish in 2015, and nearly that many in 2014.

Earlier this year, the Klamath Water Users Association, KID, Sunnyside Irrigation District, Klamath Drainage District, Pine Grove Irrigation District and California farmer

Ben Duval filed to stay the injunction, and allow irrigation to begin. The Bureau of Reclamation had proposed starting the season as early as April 19.

U.S. District Judge William Orrick held a hearing on the motion April 11. On April 19, he requested additional information from the parties by no later than Thursday, April 26. In his ruling, Judge Orrick stated he is "inclined to issue an indicative ruling that modification of the injunction is necessary."

Scott White, executive director of the Klamath Water Users Association, said it is encouraging to see the court take a closer look at the science used to order the injunction in the first place. However, he added the extension of time for a final decision is "not desirable."

"There are literally fields blowing away with the wind while we wait for water," White said.

For Paul Crawford, the delay could end up greatly diminishing his alfalfa crop and 40 acres of winter wheat at his farm near Malin, Ore.

"Having good soil moisture is key," Crawford explained. "As of this day, we're in good shape. But in two weeks, depending on temperatures, we may be drawing on that moisture."

Crawford said he needs to start irrigating his wheat crop

before May 1, or it will not last until harvest.

Unless the judge rules in the irrigators' favor, Crawford said it may bankrupt him and his family before he has a chance to get started. The 29-year-old farmer has already entertained thoughts of selling land, rather than try to expand.

"That was a pretty devastating thought process," he said.

Justin Grant, 28, also raises mostly alfalfa, grass hay and some cattle near Midland, Ore., in southern Klamath County. He said he, too, worries about being forced out of business early.

"It's very stressful," Grant said.

Grant figures he spends 60-70 percent of his budget between April and early June, but without a start date or water allocation, all basin farmers can do is throw a Hail Mary or possibly miss out on their opportunity.

"You have to stretch your neck out there," he said. "All the bills and everything are going to stack up and you don't know if you're going to be able to pay it off."

A spokesman for the Oregon Water Resources Department said the agency approved 38 drought permits covering 46 wells and 20,434 acres during the last drought year of 2015. Officials expect to see a similar number of requests in 2018.

Exact date of referendum results is unknown

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While growers who support the checkoff say it's necessary to maintain or grow the crop's market share, a faction of opponents argues the marketing dollars are inefficiently spent.

Whether there are enough detractors to defeat the program with a majority vote will become evident around mid-June, which is when USDA is expected to finish verifying and tallying the ballots.

The exact date of the referendum result is unknown, since it will depend on how many discrepancies — such as multiple votes from the same entity — the USDA will have to clear up, said Tim O'Connor, the board's executive director.

"Absent the need to do a lot of that, it shouldn't take them too long," he said, noting that growers can send their votes through the mail or electronically.

The board is operating on the assumption the checkoff program will continue and is planning for the 2019 campaign, he said.

If the checkoff is voted down, the board will pay off outstanding obligations and return any remaining money to growers who've funded the program, O'Connor said.

"The sense I have is there is a vocal opposition group, but they're the minority," he said.

Farmers Against Christmas Tree Taxation, which opposes the checkoff, is "cautiously optimistic" that growers will vote against the program based on a poll on its website, factts.org, said Frans Kok, a leader of the group and a Virginia farmer.

"Our response is overwhelmingly against the continuation of the CTPB," Kok said.

In the three years of the promotions campaign, none of Kok's customers have mentioned seeing the checkoff advertisements, he said. "No one is aware anything is happening."

Even if the Christmas tree checkoff had greater resources, such as the "Got Milk" dairy program, generic promotions aren't effective at influencing de-

mand, Kok said.

"Milk has a big megaphone but milk consumption has gone down over the life of the campaign," he said.

Keep It Real — Vote Yes, a group of checkoff supporters, has also conducted an online poll showing that farmers strongly favor the program, said Betty Malone, an Oregon farmer and leader of the group. Its website is keepitrealtovoteyes.org.

The promotions campaign has focused on the message that real trees are a boon to U.S. farmers as opposed to overseas manufacturers.

The program also highlights the capacity for real trees to absorb carbon and to be recycled, as well as the memorable family tradition of choosing them.

It's highly concerning that more than half of Millennial consumers feel artificial trees are the better choice, as checkoff research has uncovered, Malone said.

"That's information we have to work hard to correct," she said.