

LEADERSHIP ROUNDTABLE
State Sen. Andy Vidak – Aug. 2

The best thing BizFed Central Valley can do to help make good policy in Sacramento, is exactly what we are doing — only more, according to State Senator Andy Vidak.



"Get more people to the valley," he said of his fellow legislators. "The ones who aren't from here."

That's something the affable Kings County cherry farmer has been working to do since he was elected five years ago. He's taken liberal Bay Area and Los Angeles politicians on tours of farms, water districts and more in the Central Valley so they can see for themselves the breadth and depth of the area.

"They need to know the consequences of policies that shut you down," Vidak said of area businesses.

Vidak met with several BizFed Central Valley members during a Leadership Roundtable in Fresno at Granville Homes on August 2.

The conversation ranged from the gas tax to project labor agreements to the reality of politics in the Capitol.

Several members asked about the fate of SB 623, the Clean Affordable Water Act that would have taxed fertilizer, livestock operations and water sales in order to clean up bad water systems in disadvantaged communities. Vidak was a co-author of that legislation, which didn't pass the Senate then failed again as a budget trailer bill.

"Because of the gas tax, SB 1, cap and trade, Josh (former Sen. Newman of Orange County) getting recalled, they were all too frightened. Even the Dems," Vidak said.

He didn't hold out much hope for the bill's resurrection but hopes another opportunity will surface to fix the valley's many ailing water systems.

"We like to brag that we're the sixth largest economy in the world, and yet we have third-world water," he said. "And it's almost all in my district."



Switching gears, Vidak engaged in a somewhat depressing conversation with members covering work place issues — Private Attorneys General Act (PAGA) and project labor agreements.

PAGA reform, he said is next to impossible not because trial attorneys put so much money into lobbying efforts, but because they have secured positions on key committees.

"That ensures that any reform efforts are DOA."

One BizFed Central Valley member spoke about the spread of project labor agreements by building trade associations and how they are costing taxpayers exorbitant amounts of money and killing competition.



Vidak listened sympathetically but said the politics in Sacramento won't allow much to change in that arena.

In one semi-bright note, Vidak said that Gubernatorial frontrunner Gavin Newsom is a "deal maker."

With Californian businesses and families facing ever high costs here, and venting their frustration at the polls, Newsom may just be in a mood to take more reasonable measures on a host of issues.

"We'll have to see," Vidak concluded.

