

Oroville Mercury News Editorial: Legislature has us shaking our heads, again

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The California Legislature is baffling. It might be amusing to watch if it didn't wield so much power. As it is, its capricious ways are infuriating, when they aren't downright scary.

Consider the case of a couple of bills we've been watching:

Senate Bill 187 would have created a fishing license that lasts 12 months from the day you buy it, rather than always expiring Dec. 31. It's an idea that makes more sense than the current situation. Casual anglers might not want to go fishing until the weather is less wintery. But buying a license in ... say ... June, gets you a little more than six months for the price of 12.

It's enough to make a lot of people decide they don't want to go fishing. License sales have dropped. And the Fish and Game Preservation Fund — which is funded by license revenue — is running a \$20 million deficit.

The 12-month license might encourage fair-weather anglers to buy a license and turn around that revenue decline.

Good idea. Good enough that it passed the Senate unanimously. There was no opposition.

The bill hit the Assembly Appropriations Committee and died there without even a vote. Appropriations committees have the power to do that. The chair or a member can say, "We don't want to talk about that," and that's it.

Same thing happened with a bill from James Gallagher, R-Yuba City.

His Assembly Bill 1270 would have required the Department of Water Resources to perform annual visual and physical inspections of dams and reservoirs.

It would also require DWR to prepare a public five-year plan for maintenance and improvement, and update it every year. That's what Caltrans does for roadwork. Gallagher wanted the same thing done with the state's water system.

The bill cleared the Assembly and went to the Senate Appropriations Committee. Where it died. Without a vote.

There was no opposition to the bill except for the governor's administration. The bill would only have required DWR do the kinds of things it's promising it will do. So why oppose it? Isn't that odd.

But at least the Legislature was able to send AB 1540 to Brown for his signature. Both houses — and both appropriations committees — agreed it was important to designate an official state dinosaur, *Augustynolophus morrisoni*.

Only two examples of the duck-billed dinosaur have been found, both in California. Actually, they were both found in the barren stretch west of Interstate 5 between Coalinga and Los Banos. Based on the fossils, scientists believe the dinosaur was about 30 feet long.

It's been extinct for 65 million years, but apparently that was a more pressing matter than dam safety or fishing license revenue.

As we said, amusing, infuriating and scary.

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