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Editorial: Gov. Newsom: Don't tax life essentials. But tax water. Huh?



Gov. Gavin Newsom backs a first-ever tax on water use in California. AP

Incoherence isn't a good look for a governor who likes to think he's always the smartest guy in the room.

By THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE EDITORIAL BOARD

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In seeking a five-year [suspension of sales taxes](#) on diapers and menstrual products, Gov. Gavin Newsom said Tuesday that it was wrong for the government to increase the cost of essentials of life and that doing so hurt families. Newsom was praised by Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez, D-San Diego, who has touted legislation to end sales taxes on infant and toddler diapers.

Yet this is the same governor who wants to impose a [first-ever tax on water](#). Even though it is far more of an essential of life than anything else the state might tax. Even though the state is running [a huge surplus](#) that could easily pay for the water infrastructure improvements in rural farming communities that Newsom wants the new tax to fund. Even though voters in 2014 and 2018 approved [billions of dollars](#) in state [water bonds](#) that could easily pay for the improvements.

Newsom says it is “a moral disgrace” that many Californians — [360,000 people](#), according to a McClatchy report — lack regular access to clean water. But it is an intellectual disgrace that Newsom and many Democrats who tout themselves as champions of the poor want to impose a regressive tax on water to achieve policy results that are so easily within the state’s reach. Incoherent inconsistency isn’t a good look for a governor who always wants us to believe he’s the smartest guy in the room.

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