AB 345 (Muratsuchi): Oil & Gas Health and Safety Regulations

FACT SHEET

Sponsor Contact: Ingrid Brostrom, (510) 480-2329
Staff Contact: Jared Ferguson, (916) 319-2066

BACKGROUND
California does not currently restrict how close oil and gas extraction activities can occur in proximity to sensitive receptors such as schools, homes, and hospitals. On November 19, 2019, the Department of Conservation’s Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) – formerly the Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources – issued a press release announcing its intent to “establish a transparent set of rules designed to protect residents and communities near oil and gas extraction sites.” CalGEM stated that it planned to “consider a range of protective measures, including prohibiting oil and gas activities within close proximity of homes, schools, hospitals, and parks.” There is no statute or other directive to provide guidance and criteria to CalGEM for its planned rulemaking process.

PROBLEM
Nearly five and a half million Californians—mostly people of color—live within one mile of an oil or gas well. Studies link proximity to oil and gas wells to increased risk of asthma and other respiratory illnesses, pre-term births and high-risk pregnancies, and cancer. Oil and gas extraction produces air toxics, including volatile organic compounds like benzene and formaldehyde, fine and ultra-fine particulate matter, and hydrogen sulfide. Other risks include water contamination, noise pollution, spills of toxic chemicals, and explosions.

Kern and Los Angeles Counties account for more than 80 percent of the overall oil production in California, and thus bear the brunt of its health and safety hazards. Of the approximately 5.4 million Californians who live within a mile of one or more oil and gas wells, one-third live in areas of the State most burdened by environmental pollution and 92 percent of Californians living in these heavily burdened neighborhoods are people of color.

In 2015, as a result of Senate Bill 4 (Pavley), the California Council on Science and Technology conducted an analysis of the health and environmental impacts associated with hydraulic fracturing. The report recommended a health and safety buffer zone between sensitive land uses and oil and gas wells in order to protect the health and safety of communities where neighborhood drilling occurs.

SOLUTION
AB 345 provides criteria to help guide CalGEM’s rulemaking process to protect residents and communities near oil and gas extraction sites. AB 345 includes measures to:

1) Enhance public participation in the regulatory process,
2) Require the Natural Resources Agency to establish an environmental justice program, and issue EJ grants, dependent on appropriated funds.
3) Direct CalGEM to establish a minimum setback distance between oil and gas activities and sensitive receptors, including the consideration of a 2,500-foot setback distance for schools and playgrounds for possible inclusion in the regulations.

SUPPORT
Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment (Sponsor)
Voices in Solidarity Against Oil in Neighborhoods
(Sponsor)
350 Bay Area Action
350.org
350 Riverside
350 Silicon Valley
350 San Diego
350 South Bay Los Angeles
5 Gyres Institute
7th Generation Advisors
Alliance of Nurses For Healthy Environments
Amazon Watch
American Federation of Teachers #1931
Asian Pacific Environmental Network
Audubon California
Breast Cancer Action
Breast Cancer Prevention Partners
Business for Good San Diego
California Environmental Justice Alliance
California Federation of Teachers
California Interfaith Power & Light
California League of Conservation Voters
Californians Against Fracking
California Releaf
California Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism
California School Employees Association
California State PTA
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Environmental Health
Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research, and Education (COARE)
Central California Asthma Collaborative
Central California Environmental Justice Network
Central Valley Air Quality Coalition
Clean Water Action
Climate Center
Climate Hawks Vote
Coalition for Clean Air
Comité Progreso de Lamont
Committee for a Better Arvin
Committee for a Better Shafter
Committee for Green Foothills
Communities for a Better Environment
Consumer Watchdog
Courage Campaign
Defenders of Wildlife
Earthjustice
Earthworks
EJ 58 of Cafe Coop
Environment California
Environmental Health Coalition
Environmental Justice Collaborative of Kern
County/Mural Arts

Environmental Working Group
Fathers and Families of San Joaquin
FracTracker Alliance
Friends of the Earth U.S.
Fossil Free California
Greenfield Walking Group
Greenlining Institute
Greenpeace, USA
Hastings Environmental Law Association
Heal the Bay
Indivisible South Bay LA
Kiss the Ground
Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability
Mi Familia Vota
Mothers Out Front
National Parks Conservation Association
Natural Resources Defense Council
NextGen California
Northern California Recycling Assoc.
Oil Change International
Physicians for Social Responsibility - Los Angeles
Planning and Conservation League
Plastic Pollution Coalition
Promesa Boyle Heights
Rootskeeper
Sacred Places Institute
San Diego Labor Council Environmental Caucus
Save Our Shores
Service Employees International Union-CA
Seventh Generation Advisors
Sierra Club California
SoCal 350 Climate Action
Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE)
Students for Economic and Environmental Justice (SEEJ)
Sunflower Alliance
Sunrise Movement Bay Area
The Climate Center
Transition Albany
UPSTREAM
Voices for Progress
Wishtoyo Chumash Foundation
Zero Waste USA