





March 12, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

1020 N Street, Room 164

Sacramento, CA 94814

**RE: [AB 1866](#) - Idle Oil Well Cleanup - SUPPORT**

To the Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources ~ Chair Bryan, Vice Chair Flora, and Assembly Members Bauer-Kahan, Friedman, Hoover, Kalra, Mathis, Muratsuchi, Pellerin, Wicks, and Wood:

AB 1866  
SUPPORT

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write to express our strong support for AB 1866, a bill to protect Californians from the growing impacts of dangerous oil and gas wells across the state. The “polluter pays” principle protects Californians and guides California’s environmental laws; AB 1866 will help hold oil companies accountable for their legal and financial cleanup obligations.

California’s 40,000 idle oil and gas wells, and 60,000 active wells, pose a serious threat to our health, environment, and climate. Frontline communities have suffered from leaking wells, causing harm to their health. New research shows that many idle wells leak toxic chemicals like benzene, a known human carcinogen with no safe level of exposure. Inspectors have also found methane leaking at explosive levels, putting nearby residents at risk. These methane leaks—present in an estimated two-thirds of unplugged wells—worsen our climate crisis and undermine our efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

This is a massive fiscal threat as well. The oil industry has failed to set aside enough financial resources to meet its obligation to plug these wells, clean up pollution, and restore the surface to its natural condition. Californians have long borne the industry’s externalized costs to their health, water, and air, and taxpayers have already forked over millions to clean up their wells, while the oil industry chooses to forego their cleanup obligations to fill shareholder pockets with exorbitant profits. And as oil production continues to wind down in the state, the risk of stranded assets grows. Should companies attempt to walk away from their financial obligations, the multibillion-dollar burden will fall yet again to the public, devastating state coffers. Delay and inaction only increase the risk here.

AB 1866 is a much-needed overhaul to the state’s existing idle well requirements. Current law allows operators the option to pay a nominal fee to avoid plugging wells. This bill would instead require all operators to start plugging a significant portion of their wells each year. The bill places the strongest requirements on the largest producers, those companies that have historically benefited the most from California’s lax requirements. Importantly, AB 1866 will also help workers transition from a declining industry by creating thousands of jobs in plugging and remediation in areas most affected by the state’s transition away from fossil fuel production.

Californians, especially communities that have historically suffered disproportionate harms from oil and gas pollution, will benefit from better health and safety, reduced air pollution, and job creation. We strongly support AB 1866 and urge you to pass this vitally important bill.

Signed,

350 Bay Area Action

350 Conejo / San Fernando Valley

AB 1866  
SUPPORT

350 Humboldt  
350 Sacramento  
350 South Bay Los Angeles  
350 Southland Legislative Alliance  
350 Ventura County Climate Hub  
Acterra: Action for a Healthy Planet  
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy  
Environments  
Asian Pacific Environmental Network  
Azul  
Bay Area-System Change not Climate  
Change  
Black Women for Wellness  
Breast Cancer Action  
California Environmental Voters  
California Nurses for Environmental Health  
and Justice  
California Public Interest Research Group  
(CALPIRG)  
California Youth vs. Big Oil  
CALPIRG Students  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Center for Community Action and  
Environmental Justice  
Central California Environmental Justice  
Network  
Central Valley Air Quality Coalition  
CERBAT.us  
Chop Wood, Carry Water Daily Actions  
Citizen Climate Lobby Santa Cruz  
CleanEarth4Kids.org  
Climate Action California  
Climate First: Replacing Oil & Gas  
(CFROG)  
Climate Hawks Vote  
Climate Health Now  
Climate Reality Bay Area

Climate Reality Project Monterey Bay CA  
Climate Reality Project Orange County  
Chapter  
Climate Reality Project San Diego  
ClimateBrunch  
Coalition for Clean Air  
Communities for a Better Environment  
Community Environmental Council  
Corporate Ethics International  
Earth Justice Ministries  
Earthjustice  
ECO Team  
Elders Climate Action (ECA) Northern  
California (NorCal) Chapter  
Elders Climate Action (ECA) Southern  
California (SoCal) Chapter  
Elected Officials to Protect America - Code  
Blue  
Endangered Habitats League  
Environment California  
Environmental Defense Center  
Environmental Protection Information  
Center  
Environmental Working Group  
Esperanza Community Housing Corporation  
FACTS Families Advocating for Chemical  
and Toxics Safety  
Food & Water Watch  
Fossil Free California  
FracTracker Alliance  
Fridays for Future Fresno  
Fridays For Future Sacramento  
Friends of the Earth  
Glendale Environmental Coalition  
Good Neighbor Steering Committee of  
Benicia  
Greenpeace USA

AB 1866  
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Ground Game LA  
Indivisible San Jose  
Indivisible South Bay LA  
La Jolla Environmental Action  
Labor Network for Sustainability  
Los Angeles Climate Reality Project  
Los Padres ForestWatch  
Lutheran Office of Public Policy-California  
Manhattan Beach Huddle  
Mothers Out Front  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
NextGen California  
Northridge Indivisible  
Oil and Gas Action Network  
Pacific Environment  
Pelican Media  
Peninsula Interfaith Climate Action (PICA)  
Physicians for Social Responsibility - Los Angeles  
Physicians for Social Responsibility/Sacramento  
Pilipino Workers Center of Southern California  
Planning and Conservation League  
Presente.org  
Protect Playa Now  
Queers X Climate  
Redeemer Community Partnership  
RootsAction.org  
San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility  
San Joaquin Valley Democratic Club  
SanDiego350  
Santa Cruz Climate Action Network  
Sequoia ForestKeeper  
Sierra Club CA

Society of Fearless Grandmothers - Santa Barbara  
STAND-LA Coalition  
Stand.earth  
Sunflower Alliance  
Sunrise Movement Long Beach  
Sunrise Movement Los Angeles  
The Center on Race, Poverty, and the Environment  
The Climate Center  
Third Act SoCal  
West Berkeley Alliance for Clean Air and Safe Jobs  
West LA Democratic Club  
Youth Climate Strike Los Angeles  
Youth For Earth