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August 16, 2022

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Newsom to Legislature: Deliver 3,200ft Setbacks on New and Existing Wells

Environmental justice groups applaud Newsom's action on health and safety buffer zones for oil and gas wells; warn that the Governor's overreliance on carbon capture will lock in fossil fuel infrastructure.

SACRAMENTO, CA - Governor Newsom has asked the state legislature to end neighborhood oil drilling as part of a climate package he's aiming to pass before the end of the year's legislative session on August 31. In language sent to the legislature on August 11th, one proposal would mandate a 3,200 foot health and safety buffer separating communities from both new and existing oil and gas extraction sites.

The end-of-session intervention by the Governor follows years of advocacy led by frontline communities most impacted by oil and gas drilling. The proposed legislation would mark the end of all new extraction within the health and safety setback zone, prohibit operators from obtaining rework permits on existing extraction sites in the zone, and apply engineering and pollution controls to current operations that endanger our communities. Because oil wells are generally only productive for a few years without reworking them, this policy will phase out neighborhood drilling in the near-term.

"Finally, after years and years of environmental justice communities asking for comprehensive public health setbacks, we're seeing some real action on this acute public health issue. We're ready to see the legislature follow the Governor's lead and end the chronic crisis of neighborhood drilling in California." said **Dan Ress, Staff Attorney, Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment.**

Banning these harmful oil extraction methods is a critical environmental justice issue, especially as the most impacted frontline communities living near these oil and gas wells in California are often lower-income communities and non-white communities without access to quality healthcare. Nearly 7.5 million Californians live within one mile of an oil or gas well, while nearly 3 million live within the proposed 3,200 ft setback zone.

Last Fall, [California's own scientists confirmed](#) what we've long known - there is no safe distance from oil and gas extraction. California's frontline communities suffer particularly due to increased air pollution from chemicals used during extraction methods and fine



particulate matter, known as PM2.5, which is often found in increased concentration surrounding oil and gas wells. These toxic byproducts of extraction are associated with chronic bronchitis, a higher risk for a serious case of COVID-19, epidemic levels of pediatric asthma, cancers, headaches, nosebleeds, high-risk pregnancies, and higher risks for pre-term birth babies.

In a parallel trailer bill, the Governor's office has also proposed language on carbon capture, use, and storage (CCUS). The Governor's proposal includes a massive expansion of CCUS, with a target of removing 100 million metric tons of carbon dioxide by 2045, and a ban on the use of carbon capture for Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR). The Governor's targets rely on engineered carbon removal to address more than 20% of the state's projected 2045 emissions: more than double what scientists deem appropriate. The [IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report: Mitigation of Climate Change](#) warns that carbon capture and removal is a costly technology, unproven at scale, that prolongs fossil fuel use.

"While there's near-universal scientific and public health support for health and safety buffer zones, the same cannot be said for carbon capture, use, and storage (CCUS). The biggest champions of CCUS are oil and gas operators – even as refinery communities and San Joaquin Valley residents raise real concerns that politicians are colluding with industry to unleash a new toxic legacy in the footsteps of oil and gas extraction," **said Catherine Garoupa White, Executive Director of the Central Valley Air Quality Coalition.**

Frontline, environmental justice, and public health organizations with VISION who have been advocating for an end to the state's dangerous and dirty practice of neighborhood fossil fuel extraction for years have issued the following statements in response to the proposed language:

"After years of asking for an end to the racist and unjust practice of neighborhood drilling, this is a clear signal from the Newsom Administration that neighborhood drilling must come to an end in California. The millions of Californians who live within the proposed 3,200ft setback zone, some with oil and gas derricks on their own fencelines, will be watching the legislature closely and calling on them to support the Governor's proposal," **said Cesar Aguirre, Senior Community Organizer, Central California Environmental Justice Network**

"We've known for years that neighborhood drilling is toxic, and now we're seeing Governor Newsom take real steps toward ending that reality for millions of Californians. Right now, environmental justice communities are looking to the legislature to carry the Governor's vision forward and tell Big Oil once and for all that our communities are not



sacrifice zones. It will be clear now more than ever which members are willing to sell our neighborhoods to Big Oil greed, and which are taking a stand for climate and environmental justice.” said **Kobi Naseck, VISION Coalition Coordinator**

“At the same time that the Governor is proposing what would be the strongest setbacks policy of any state and banning the use of carbon capture and sequestration for enhanced oil recovery, he’s also leading California to hand over billions to the oil and gas industry with mythic, oversized carbon capture and removal targets. These carbon removal targets are a poison pill riding alongside common sense public health and climate policy.” **said Isa Flores-Jones, Communications Manager, California Environmental Justice Alliance**

“It’s hard to understate what this means for me and my family. For years we’ve been dealing with the pollution from the oil and gas sites in our neighborhood, and now finally the Governor is telling us that we matter and that we shouldn’t have to put up with the headaches, the nosebleeds, the awful smells, and the fear for our children and their health. We can’t wait a day longer for this text to become law and to end neighborhood drilling.”

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