



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **CA Assembly Appropriations Makes AB 345 a Two-Year Bill**

*Environmental justice coalition VISION releases statement urging California legislators to prioritize the bill's protection of public health and safety*

SACRAMENTO— Yesterday, Assembly Bill (AB) 345, which would create the first statewide health-protective buffer zones between new oil and gas wells and sensitive land uses, was made into a two-year bill by the Assembly Appropriations Committee to provide additional time for revisions. The Chairperson of the Appropriations Committee, Lorena Gonzalez, indicated her general support for the policy and committed to working with the author to find a way to move the bill forward at the end of the session.

The bill, authored by Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi (D-Torrance), would ensure new oil and gas wells not on federal land are located 2,500 feet away from homes, schools, hospitals, playgrounds and health clinics.

Championed by frontline communities directly impacted by oil and gas operations in partnership with environmental justice advocates, AB 345 will be taken up after this year's legislative session concludes. In response to today's decision from the Appropriations Committee, leadership of VISION (Voices In Solidarity Against Oil in Neighborhoods) released the following statements:

“Health and safety for communities on the fence line to dangerous drilling is an urgent issue for Californians across the state—from Wilmington to Arvin and beyond—who breathe in the toxic emissions from nearby oil wells daily. Every moment we do not act, our children and families are paying with their health and quality of life. We look forward to continuing conversations on how to get this common sense, science-based health and



safety zone into law,” stated Ingrid Brostrom, Assistant Director with the Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment and VISION co-chair.

“As the Assembly Bill 345 hangs in the balance, so do the lives of many fence line communities across the Central Valley, Los Angeles basin and all other residents living next door to oil & gas development where they live, play and work. We hope that AB 345 is a top priority in the next cycle and that we end toxic pollution near our more sensitive receptors, our families,” said Gustavo Aguirre Jr., Kern County Coordinator with the Central California Environmental Justice Network (CCEJN) and Steering Committee member of VISION.

“The San Joaquin Valley and Los Angeles regions are the most polluted air basins in the nation. People from these regions suffer the consequences, including stunted lung development, high asthma rates, high death rates from respiratory diseases, and years of life lost. Residents from these regions in close proximity to oil and gas operations endure double the costs from the toxic petrochemicals and fine particle pollution emitted. AB 345 is necessary to protect the public health of all Californians, and our coalition is excited to continue to support the passage of the bill,” shared Genevieve Gale, Director of the Central Valley Air Quality Coalition and Steering Committee member of VISION.

“We are confident that the Legislature will prioritize community health over the interests of Big Oil. We look forward to working with our brothers and sisters in labor and the leadership towards identifying win-win solutions and offering this important health protective measure to our frontline communities, who have unfairly endured the adverse impacts of oil drilling in their neighborhoods for decades,” said Bahram Fazeli, Policy Director for Communities for a Better Environment and Steering Committee member of VISION.

“Our communities are resolved to keep fighting for a health and safety buffer, and we are proud to have Assemblymember Muratsuchi champion this issue with us. His leadership is a model for other elected leaders of a forward thinking and justice-based approach to protecting public health,” shared Alvaro Palacios Casanova, Senior Policy Advocate with the Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment. “As Big Oil struggles to remain relevant, our communities know that this bill is a Health Protector and a Justice Bringer. We are happy that AB 345 will have an opportunity to make its way through the California legislature in 2020.”

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