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Coalition Supporting SB 467 Vows to Continue Fight for Setbacks

Opposition from 3 Democratic Senators kept the bill from moving forward

Sacramento, CA (April 13, 2021) - Yesterday, [Senate Bill 467 \(Wiener, Limon\)](#) - the bill to create health and safety buffer zones; phase out the most dangerous fracking methods in California; and provide steps to protect workers from volatile oil markets - was blocked in an initial vote by members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and the Environment.

One Democrat, Senator Eggman (D-5) joined Republicans to oppose the broadly popular fracking and setbacks bill, while two Democrats, Senators Hueso (D-40) and Senator Hertzberg (D-18) abstained from casting their votes. Following their no vote on Assembly Bill 345 last year, this is the second time these moderate Democrats, Sen. Hueso and Sen. Hertzberg have refused to support a major oil and gas regulation bill that would protect frontline communities.

At the April 12th hearing, residents and advocates called on Senators to consider the health impacts of oil and gas drilling, including, "birth defects, premature birth, low birth weights, asthma, hospitalization for heart failure, fatigue, stress, and cancers."

Without legislation like SB 467 and the important conversations and actions it generates, workers will continue to lose their jobs, and frontline communities will continue to suffer disproportionate public health impacts. Approximately 7 million Californians live within one mile of an oil well, and 92 percent of those residents belong to communities of color. In places like Kern County, oil and gas extraction workers continue to see a steady loss of jobs, most of which are non-union blue collar jobs, with no protections in place.

Today, the statewide coalition of environmental, economic, racial justice and public health organizations announces their intent to continue fighting for health and safety buffer zones, an end to dangerous drilling, and just transition for all California workers.

Below, sponsors and authors of the bill offer some statements regarding the vote yesterday:

“California can no longer call itself a climate or racial justice leader while continuing to perpetuate environmental racism that has long oppressed generations of Black, Indigenous, and Latinx communities along with other communities of color and low-income communities” **said Juan Flores, a community organizer with the Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment, one of the SB 467’s co-sponsors**

“Yet again, elected politicians have revealed their prioritization of fossil fuel talking points and interests over the people they are supposed to represent. Now, more and more Californians are waking up to the realities of environmental injustice and their state’s legacy of environmental racism, which impacts low-income and Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities more than any other. VISIÓN will keep fighting for setbacks and to ensure our rights to clean air, clean water, and a livable future are protected,” **said Kobi Naseck, Coalition Coordinator, Voices in Solidarity Against Oil in Neighborhoods (VISIÓN), one of SB 467’s co-sponsors**

“We are deeply disappointed with the actions of Senator Hueso and all of the Democratic Senators who sided with Republicans in blocking this critical bill,” **said Franco Garcia with the Environmental Health Coalition, a founding member of the California Environmental Justice Alliance.** “San Diego families live and breathe the 6th worst air quality in the country, with the largest toll on working communities of color. By staying silent on this essential bill, Senator Hueso will continue to endanger frontline communities across the state, including his own San Diego constituents.”

“On Monday, Senators disregarded extensive scientific evidence of the continued harm - including increased preterm birth rates, high rates of cancer and respiratory disease, and lifelong neurological disease - faced by frontline communities due to oil and gas extraction,” **said Martha Dina Arguello, Executive Director, Physicians for Social Responsibility - Los Angeles.** “79 percent of Californians support establishing a setback for oil operations - support that had only grown from a previous poll conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic.”

“Senate Bill 467 is a hard fought opportunity to enact holistic measures for a much needed transition from a dying industry. The lack of leadership shown by Senator Eggman to reign in a major source of local and regional air pollution in the San Joaquin Valley is sad but not surprising, as moderates in our region typically side with polluters over people,” **said Dr. Catherine Garoupa White, Executive Director of the Central Valley Air Quality Coalition.** “The notion that California has the safest oil operations flies in the face of the everyday realities of communities across the Valley, who are sheltering in place next to toxic sources like oil wells, refineries, and leaky pipelines that harm their health and quality of life. Every delay is justice denied for some of the most polluted communities of color and low income communities in our region. We will continue to hold decision makers at all levels accountable for the lack of health protections and the urgent need for a just transition plan for workers and communities.”

“CCEJN has seen first hand the need in environmental justice communities. A common theme in all of the communities we work in is that politicians would never make the decisions that they make if they lived in the same conditions as frontline communities. They wouldn't put oil and gas this close to schools the way they are in Shafter. They wouldn't put an oil pump in their own backyard like in Arvin. SB 467 was California's chance to right the wrongs of environmental injustice in California. Maybe residents are correct.” **said Cesar Aguirre, a community organizer with the Central California Environmental Justice Network.** “Maybe politicians would have voted yes on SB 467 if it meant protecting their families, because saving ours is obviously not worth it to them.”

“Once again we see the health and well-being of children who already live in poverty, have the highest rates of asthma, and whose mothers have the highest rates of preterm birth, traded off in the name of the economy.” **said Kevin D. Hamilton, RRT and Chief Executive Officer of Central California Asthma Collaborative.** “Those health conditions are clearly associated with the pollution generated by the very activities SB 467 would have restricted. Yet the committee created to protect them, failed to do so! An economy built on the continued suffering children and whose benefits accrue mainly to those not forced to live next to the ‘well’ that creates them is not sustainable and should not be supported by our elected officials.”

“While we’re extremely disappointed by the Committee’s rejection of SB 467, we’re inspired by the coalition behind this critical climate and public health measure,” **said Senator Scott Wiener and Senator Monique Limón, joint authors of SB 467.** “Frontline communities of color stood up for their families and against drilling practices that severely harm people’s health, particularly children’s health. And our coalition stood up for the basic but important notions that California should lead on climate action and that permitting massive, destructive oil drilling isn’t consistent with being a climate leader. While we saw this effort stifled, this issue isn’t going away. We’ll continue to fight for aggressive climate action, against harmful drilling, and for the health of our communities.”

"The phase-out of oil drilling is inevitable and a 2,500ft health and safety buffer is a much needed start towards our collective healing. Electeds must step up and choose people over profit. Many of us are experiencing long-term health impacts due to our close proximity to oil drilling. Wilmington has so much oil drilling, I even found out that I live above two plugged wells! I shouldn't have to use an inhaler just to go for a jog. I just want to be able to step out and breathe fresh air," **said Wendy, a Wilmington, CA community member and current intern with Communities for a Better Environment.**

The coalition supporting SB 467 has vowed to continue fighting for setbacks and a just transition through ongoing CalGEM rulemaking processes, campaigns for local ordinances, and future legislative efforts. They look forward to building the labor-climate alliance and hope to guarantee all Californian’s rights to a just transition to a decarbonized economy. They commend Senators Wiener and Limón for their support on this critical legislation, and thank the Senators who were brave enough to vote in support of protecting the health and wellbeing of frontline communities and workers and the millions of Californians affected by oil and gas pollution statewide.

In calling for a managed decline, SB 467, matched the urgency of the moment we’re in, and this week members of the Senate Natural Resources Committee failed to meet that moment.