

**Contact:**

Kobi Naseck | VISIÓN | 214-609-2439 | kobi@vision-ca.org

## **Fossil Fuel Scorecard Highlights Nearly a Decade of Industry's Influence on CA Politics**

*Majority of CA Assemblymembers Receive "F" Grade For Ties to Oil and Gas*

SACRAMENTO, Calif—Today, the environmental justice coalition [VISION](#) released a scorecard assessing the oil and gas records of California legislators. This scorecard represents a comprehensive analysis of legislative voting records during each legislator's entire time in office. It is the first and only scorecard to take into account the past nine years of service, cumulatively scoring legislators' key votes on environmental justice provisions and major financial contributions received from the oil and gas industry.

### **Key Findings:**

#### **CA State Assembly:**

- Nearly 50% of assemblymembers received an "F" grade for their ties to the fossil fuel industry.
- 30% of assemblymembers received an "A" grade for standing with environmental justice communities.
- Only four assemblymembers emerged as Champions: Marc Levine (D); Laura Friedman (D); Richard Bloom (D); Al Muratsuchi (D).

#### **CA State Senate**

- 36% of senators received an "F" grade for their ties to the fossil fuel industry.
- 24% of senators received an "A" grade for standing with environmental justice communities.
- Only five senators emerged as Champions: Ben Allen (D); Henry Stern (D); Anthony Portantino (D); Monique Limón (D); Scott Wiener (D)

Grades were calculated by rewarding legislative actions that prioritize public health and climate justice principles and penalizing legislators' voting records when they prioritize oil and gas industry interests and profits. The VISION Scorecard weights recent votes more heavily and penalizes legislators who accepted at least \$10,000 in direct campaign contributions from one or more oil and gas companies and/or industry trade groups. Legislators who signed the "No Fossil Fuel Money Pledge" and then violated that pledge earned a heavy penalty on the scorecard. VISION plans to update this scorecard annually, and will continue to weight recent bills more heavily than older bills. As community members highlighted at the briefing this morning, these votes have real impacts on frontline communities and a very clear human cost.

Wendy Miranda from Communities for a Better Environment (CBE) talks about her experience of living in Wilmington, one of the most polluted communities in the state saying, "Growing up I've seen how it's affected my neighbors and friends. It was very common for all of my friends to

have asthma, we would always see them having nosebleeds throughout the day, or headaches from the odors. As a community we've experienced oil spills in the past due to leaking from plugged wells. As frontline community members we shouldn't have to be constantly dealing with these issues every day."

Next week, the Natural Resources Committee will vote on [Senate Bill 467](#), a bill that would require the state oil and gas regulator, CalGEM, to establish a minimum setback distance between oil and gas operations and communities, ban dangerous extraction methods including fracking, and provide steps for a just transition for fossil fuel workers. The bill was introduced by Senators Wiener and Limón in response to the urgent need to protect communities living on the front lines of California's oil and gas operations and answered Gov. Gavin Newsom's call in an [executive order](#) last September for a ban on fracking in the state.

Juan Flores, with the Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment says "I see this as a state failure because we have seen that other states in the country have been able to successfully ban fracking. If we like to brag that we are the most progressive state in the nation, then we should be the example for the nation, we should not be the last ones, we should be leading, and now we are behind."

Discussing the need for a just transition for workers across the state, he goes on to say "In the decades to come as we pull away from extraction, we still need the expertise of oil workers to plug the wells, to keep monitoring those wells, to make sure abandoned wells are sealed. Their expertise is valuable. We have seen studies that show that we can generate more jobs with oil well remediation than the entire oil and gas extraction sector in California."

Nearly 7.5 million Californians live within a mile of an active oil well and are exposed to carcinogenic chemicals, asthma attack-inducing emissions, and the threat of catastrophic accidents or explosions. The vast majority of Californians who live in close proximity to oil drilling are from communities of color who are already severely overburdened with other forms of pollution. The state's own independent scientific analysis of oil production in 2015 found that proximity to oil production sites increased exposure to toxic chemicals and risk of serious health impacts. Yet there is currently no regulation in the state keeping toxic oil and gas operations distanced from our neighborhoods.

### **About VISION**

[VISION or VISIÓN](#) (Voices in Solidarity Against Oil in Neighborhoods) is a bilingual coalition of environmental justice, public health and safety, air quality, frontline, and indigenous organizations that formed to protect California's most vulnerable communities from oil and gas extraction in their backyards.

###

More from our partners from this morning:

**Juan Flores with Center on Race Poverty & the Environment:**

“For community members and our communities specifically in the Central Valley, this scorecard is truly going to reflect why we are so behind in California when it comes to regulating oil and gas, something that is actually enforceable. We want to see a ban on fracking, because fracking or any other method of extreme extraction is not a problem only for communities where the extraction occurs, it’s a problem for the whole state if not the nation. Water used in fracking is even used to irrigate our crops. We, in the Central Valley, are the food basket of the nation, and our people, nationwide, are eating the food irrigated with this water. We have to be able to ban fracking as soon as possible. This drilling is happening so close to our community members that it is making our communities sick. I see this as a state failure because we have seen that other states in the country have been able to successfully ban fracking. If we like to brag that we are the most progressive state in the nation, then we should be the example for the nation, we should not be the last ones, we should be leading, and now we are behind.

Pretty much every other oil-extraction state has setbacks in place, and we are failing in that aspect as well. We are failing to protect our communities. They’re asking for it to be done far away from their backyards, from the schools our children are going to, from the church that I worship at every Sunday. We are failing at enforcing our own regulations, this is a strong critique but it is the truth. We don’t enforce the regulations that we have in place. For us, our community members it’s almost a common sense problem: if you’re not going to enforce your own regulations, why even drill? It makes the state look very naive to have regulations that we are not enforcing.

When it comes to stopping drilling and extraction, there are people that claim that this is not economically viable, but that is false. There are enough studies to prove that we can have a thriving economy with a just transition. With that just transition, we not only want to take care of the economy, but we have to make sure that oil workers are on the forefront of a just transition, that they are the ones benefiting from the coming jobs. In the decades to come as we pull away from extraction, we still need the expertise of oil workers to plug the wells, to keep monitoring those wells, to make sure abandoned wells are sealed. Their expertise is valuable. We have seen studies that we can generate more jobs with oil well remediation than the entire oil and gas extraction sector.

Our communities are very excited about SB 467 and this scorecard. This scorecard is going to show us one more time the reason why many legislators are holding back from actually voting for environmental laws that will protect our communities. That’s something we ought to be speaking out about because we have to hold them accountable, that’s why they are public officials, otherwise this can be an oligarchy.”

**Wendy Miranda, Communities for a Better Environment:**

“I live in Wilmington, which is a neighborhood in the city of LA, which is also on stolen Tongva land. I’m also a grad student at UCLA and decided to study public health and urban planning because growing up in Wilmington and seeing how close oil wells are to homes in my neighborhood, I wanted to make sure that these atrocious plants aren’t made again. Through

my school, I found Communities for a Better Environment (CBE). Growing up in Wilmington it is very common to see these wells whenever I'm walking around my block, on my way to school, on my way to work, or even close to parks. Wilmington is home to one of the largest concentrations of oil drilling in LA, it also has multiple refineries surrounding the neighborhood, we also have one of the largest port complexes in the country and also diesel trucks are always coming in and out of this neighborhood as well as trains with crude oil.

On top of all of that, this is also my home. I love my community. I have been living in Wilmington for most of my life. I live under 2 plugged wells and about 5 minutes from one of the largest oil drilling sites in LA. Being involved with CBE and my education, I have made the connection of how living next to these sites does affect our health. My mother's health has been affected. She relies on her nebulizer, a machine used to treat her asthma, and she uses it every day to help her breathe better. It has affected my own health. I like to run and over the years I have noticed how I have to use my inhaler prior to running now and can't even run half a mile without wheezing or feeling I'm going to pass out unless I use my inhaler. Growing up I've seen how it's affected my neighbors and friends. It was very common for all of my friends to have asthma, we would always see them having nosebleeds throughout the day, or headaches from the odors. As a community we've experienced oil spills in the past due to leaking from plugged wells. As frontline community members we shouldn't have to be constantly dealing with these issues every day. We're tired of having this in our backyards. We're tired of the oil wells being close to our homes, our schools, our churches, our clinics, our parks. We have the right to breathe clean air. This is why I'm urging elected officials, especially the Assembly member who represents my community, Asm. Mike Gipson, as well as other elected officials in the LA region to really step up. It's time to protect the health of frontline communities. Phasing out oil drilling is on the table **now**. We need our elected officials to choose people over profits by supporting bills like SB 467 and we need them to really listen to us when we say "No Drilling Where We're Living."

### **Cesar from Central California Environmental Justice Network (CCEJN) on VISION Scorecard Champions:**

"We show you 9 assembly members and senators who stand strong with the values of environmental justice and climate progress even in the face of relentless opposition from the fossil fuel industry. Whether state house veterans or new to Sacramento, these champions don't just cast good votes, they author bills. They use their platform to advocate for justice and engage with communities to find solutions to critical environmental problems."

### **Cesar from CCEJN on VISION Scorecard Lost Causes:**

"Whether it be lack of courage to stand up to the fossil fuel industry or whether they don't see public health and frontline communities as the priority it should be, or simply because they hail from a district that is so conservative that any opposition to oil and gas is a non-starter, these legislators are not realistic targets for advocacy. It doesn't mean we are any less disappointed in their votes, but merely efforts to persuade them as elected officials to embrace environmental justice, and a just transition to a fossil fuel free economy are better spent elsewhere."

**Catherine Garoupa-White with Central Valley Air Quality Coalition (CVAQ) on VISION Scorecard Legislators that must #StepUporStepAside:**

“VISION’s scorecard is a record of the past that can help us improve outcomes in the future. For the Central Valley Air Quality Coalition, we know that achieving environmental justice and attaining clean air in our region requires holistic and transformative actions that center community health. With that in mind, VISION has identified these 13 legislators for a call to action, to improve their scores in 2021 by partnering with frontline groups to protect us from the harmful effects of oil and gas extraction.”