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Competing Proposals for New Power Plant Spark Debate at the California Public Utilities Commission

Communities Outraged by Southern California Edison's Disregard of Disproportionate Burdens in Siting Fourth Power Plant in Oxnard

San Francisco, CA | February 23, 2016 — Community leaders are dismayed that the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) may soon decide that environmental justice can be ignored in its review of a contract for a new power plant on Oxnard's coast. At stake is whether the CPUC will approve a fourth dirty power plant in a low-income community of color that already hosts a toxic site, massive exposure to pesticides, and other dangerous pollution sources. Another power plant would continue a discriminatory pattern of dumping the region's pollution in communities of color.

On Friday, February 12th, CPUC commissioner Carla Peterman issued a proposed decision to allow Southern California Edison (SCE) and NRG to move forward with a contract to build the Oxnard power plant. This proposal is an about-face from two other proposed decisions released earlier this month, which affirmed environmental justice policies and requirements, and declined to approve the plant at this time. Since release of those proposed decisions, CPUC commissioners have been subjected to relentless industry lobbying and political pressure urging them to put industry interests before the health and well-being of residents.

The CPUC is the only agency with regulatory authority and oversight duties over utility companies to ensure that they consider environmental justice when approving contracts for power plants. Community leaders applauded the originally proposed decisions to postpone the power plant, and were dismayed with the latest proposal, which would undermine the CPUC's legal mandate to address environmental justice and protect low-income communities like Oxnard.

Oxnard, where NRG seeks to locate the plant, is a low-income community, already overburdened by existing power plants and other pollution sources. Oxnard residents and environmental justice advocates who have fought tirelessly against the proposal of yet another power plant are outraged at this alternate decision that ignores the legal mandate that the CPUC must consider environmental justice when considering new power plant contracts.

"We are deeply concerned about this sudden alternate proposed decision to authorize an unwanted dirty power plant. We know that SCE has been lobbying heavily and this is a moment where the community deserves due process. We demand that SCE follows through on its obligation to take into account

environmental justice. A roll-back on environmental justice protections could set a dangerous precedent in CPUC decision-making and for environmental justice communities across California. We urge the Commission to effectuate law and policies that were created to protect the communities most impacted by this decision.”

Strela Cervas, Co-Director, California Environmental Justice Alliance

“Oxnard's working-class immigrant families are tired of being picked on by polluting industry, who are using their immense lobbying resources to pressure the California Public Utilities Commissioners to reject Judge DeAngelis' proposed decision. The commissioners should listen to the overwhelming voice of the community opposed to this project, and uphold Judge DeAngelis' decision acknowledging that Oxnard has long been burdened with the region's most polluting projects and that this power plant proposal continues that racist legacy.”

Lucas Zucker, Policy and Communications Director, Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy

“The CPUC cannot delegate its responsibility to the California Energy Commission, or any other agency. The CPUC is the only agency that regulates Southern California Edison, and the only agency with authority to make sure that SCE follows the public utilities code when it procures renewable resources and gas-fired resources. No one else is going to tell the utilities and industry that they must follow the law. When a utility takes a shortcut by avoiding an environmental justice analysis, the CPUC must make sure it goes back to do its procurement correctly.”

Gladys Limón, Lawyer, Communities for a Better Environment

The proposed decision is scheduled to be heard by the CPUC on March 17th. The CPUC will receive comments on whether to adopt the newly issued alternate proposed decision over the next weeks.

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[California Environmental Justice Alliance](http://www.caleja.org) is a statewide, community-led alliance that works to achieve environmental justice by advancing policy solutions. We unite the powerful local organizing of our members in the communities most impacted by environmental hazards – low-income communities and communities of color - to create comprehensive opportunities for change at a statewide level. We build the power of communities across California to create policies that will alleviate poverty and pollution. Together, we are growing the statewide movement for environmental health and social justice. www.caleja.org

[Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy](http://www.causenow.org) builds grassroots power to invoke social, economic, and environmental justice for the people of California's Central Coast region through policy research, leadership development, organizing, and advocacy. CAUSE defines the Central Coast region as the counties of Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito. www.causenow.org

[Communities for a Better Environment](http://www.cbecal.org) works in low-income Latino and African American communities in Oakland, Richmond, Wilmington and Huntington Park. CBE combines community organizing, science-based advocacy, and legal intervention into a uniquely effective single strategy to successfully impact change in these target communities and develop campaigns to address health hazards in the community. www.cbecal.org