



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# Oxnard activists disrupt Energy Commission hearing to protest fourth power plant proposed for overburdened community

**Oxnard, CA | January 11, 2017** — On the heels of Gov. Brown's [\\$179.5 billion budget proposal](#), which included a push to continue the state's climate leadership, environmental and racial justice activists protested a recommendation from California Energy Commission (CEC) staff to build a fourth fossil fuel power plant in Oxnard. Local youth and volunteers from Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE), Showing up for Racial Justice (SURJ), Ventura County Climate Hub, and Mixteco/Indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP) shut down the meeting, locking arms around the microphone and chanting "Clean Air for Oxnard," "No more power plants," and "Break free from NRG." Houston-based NRG Energy, Inc. is the company behind the proposed 262-megawatt natural gas plant under consideration by the CEC.

Yesterday's hearing was the first since the CEC issued its final staff recommendation to approve the project in December. The CEC is currently holding a series of community hearings and is anticipated to approve the power plant in May. If built, the so-called "Puente" proposal would be the fourth dirty power plant in a community already saddled with three landfills and a superfund site where a retired metal recycling plant left behind a wake of toxic chemicals. As two of the town's power plants are scheduled for retirement, the community had [hoped to turn a page from its polluted past](#) and [reclaim its beach](#). The NRG proposal threatens this progress.

The state's Coastal Commission has recommended against the plant based on concerns about flooding due to sea level rise, but following intense industry lobbying, the California Public Utilities Commission voted in favor of the project last May. The final decision now rests with the Energy Commission. A broad coalition, including environmental and racial justice organizations and clean tech groups, have called on the state to reject the plant and instead explore clean energy alternatives.

Maricela Morales, Executive Director of CAUSE, said of Tuesday's demonstration: "Following the example of venerable nonviolent peaceful demonstrators for justice such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and César Chávez, we are standing up to the oppressive powers when they choose to turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to the residents of Oxnard, who have made it undeniably clear that we are done with being a sacrifice zone for polluting fossil fuel power plants. No more!"

California has earned global recognition for its bold approach to fighting climate change and has vowed to stand firm against Trump administration attacks. Last year, the state adopted the boldest greenhouse gas reduction goal in North America (SB 32), and has been praised for an approach that fuses climate action with a commitment to social equity. The state's reputation is at odds with new fossil fuel investment in a community some say has been treated like a "sacrifice zone," or a dumping ground for pollution that nearby communities like Malibu and Santa Barbara would never accept. The area's toxic legacy is reflected in its public health outcomes: Oxnard has some of the highest rates of asthma in California.

“We disrupted the meeting because we’re tired of Oxnard being a dumping ground for big business. The youth here care and deserve clean air,” said Elma Del Aguila, a CAUSE youth leader and a senior at Channel Islands High School.

Oxnard’s Mayor Pro Tem, Carmen Ramirez, agreed: “It’s time for Oxnard to have the clean air, clean energy and restored coast we deserve. Alongside virtually every other local elected representative at the city, county, state, and federal levels, I’m urging the California Energy Commission to stop making Oxnard the sacrifice zone.”

Yesterday’s protest was [broadcast live on Facebook](#), and related Twitter activity included the hashtags #CleanAir4Oxnard and #BreakFreeFromNRG. CAUSE also [posted a statement](#) with video links on their website.

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[California Environmental Justice Alliance](#) 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](http://www.caleja.org)

[Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy](#) 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](http://www.causenow.org)