



## CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE

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### **California Advocates Defeat Dangerous Exemption for Oil Refineries**

*Environmental Justice Advocates Urge Governor Newsom to Sign 4 Priority Bills*

**Sacramento, CA | September 17, 2016** — As the 2019 legislative session came to a close last Friday, the California Environmental Justice Alliance advanced several of our priority bills to the Governor's desk and helped defeat a last minute gut and amend that was pulled at the final hour.

AB 1299 (Salas) would have removed refinery air quality monitoring requirements for small refineries in rural areas, specifically targeting a facility owned by Kern Oil. It would have set a dangerous precedent and told rural residents that they are not entitled to the same protections as residents in urban communities. This exemption would have put the health of hundreds of families and children at risk as an affront to extensive health data and decades of advocacy and community organizing to combat the negative impacts of Big Oil. Residents have a right to know what is in the air they're breathing. We need more monitoring at oil refineries, not a giveaway to a refinery with extensive health and safety violations on record.

"When operating within regulated limits, refineries pose serious risks for nearby communities. Monitors are an important step to ensuring the public knows what they are breathing and that regulated entities follow the rules. To say that rural communities don't deserve the same protections and urban communities is an affront to the communities who suffer real health consequences and have been fighting for decades for protections from the oil industry."

— **Katie Valenzuela, Policy & Political Director, California Environmental Justice Alliance**

"We are happy that AB 1299 will be pulled. Kern Oil Refinery as a business entity in California is obligated to do air monitoring in order to comply with both state and federal law. We are committed to working with the author on ways to improve the air quality in the San Joaquin Valley, but exempting refineries from air monitoring is not one of them."

— **Alvaro Palacios Casanova, Senior Policy Advocate, Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment**

"AB 1299 is irresponsible and demonstrates a disregard for quality of life and public health for rural communities in the San Joaquin Valley. We are pleased that Senator Hurtado and Assemblymember Salas ultimately listened to the people that daily confront the impacts of the oil industry. This is a good start. We look forward to working in partnership with community leaders over the interim to help their legislators understand and prioritize the health impacts rural communities face and fight on a daily basis."

— **Phoebe Seaton, Co-Director, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability**

"AB 1299 sets a bad precedent and our members are first in line to receive negative impacts compounded by the exemptions this bill was seeking. AIRE collaborative joined a large coalition of environmental justice organizations that stood opposed to this last-minute attempt to weaken existing refinery monitoring. We are pleased to hear AB1299 was pulled from consideration."

— **Maximiliano Ochoa, Comité Civico del Valle**

California Environmental Justice Alliance members and partners also express appreciation for a range of environmental justice measures that were passed by the legislature last week, calling on Governor Newsom to sign these bills into law: AB 423 (Gloria), AB 1232 (Gloria), AB 1628 (R. Rivas), and SB 160 (Jackson) that will bring clean air, energy efficiency, cultural relevant emergency planning, and improvements in land use planning by expanding California's definition of environmental justice.

- **AB 423 (Gloria) San Diego Air District:** Restructures the San Diego Air Pollution Control District Board so that it better reflects the diversity of San Diego County residents. The Board would include representation from additional San Diego cities and public members, including an environmental justice representative.
- **AB 1232 (Gloria) Healthy Homes Act:** Creates and expands anti-displacement protections for state energy efficiency programs serving low-income customers. The bill guides agencies in data collection to ensure enforceability and to better penetrate the unregulated affordable housing market. The bill would also increase coordination and collaboration between the Low Income Weatherization Program and public health programs addressing health issues in homes of vulnerable residents.
- **AB 1628 (R. Rivas) Bureau of Environmental Justice:** Supports the Attorney General's Bureau of Environmental Justice in its efforts to protect vulnerable communities from environmental hazards and adds "meaningful involvement" to the definition of environmental justice to ensure all voices are heard.
- **SB 160 (Jackson) Cultural Competence in Emergency Planning:** Requires counties to engage communities when updating emergency plans to ensure that local disaster preparedness and response activities (i.e. alerts, communications, evacuations, and sheltering) are culturally competent and meet diverse needs. This bill prioritizes reaching culturally diverse communities including immigrant and refugees and low-income communities of color among other groups.

"We applaud the California State Legislature for approving AB 423. Governor Newsom now has the power to ensure the San Diego Air Pollution Control District (APCD) board gets the diversity it needs to address some of the most urgent air pollution problems in California, and be the first in the state to include an environmental justice representative."

— **Diane Takvorian, Executive Director, Environmental Health Coalition**

"We are excited that AB 1232 will bring real cost-savings, comfort, and habitability to homes in environmental justice communities, and we will continue to fight to make sure that California's investments into communities like ours include protections for renters. AB 1232 shows what's possible when immigrant and refugee communities can actively shape the laws affecting our lives, our future gets brighter."

— **Shina Robinson, Local Policy Associate, Asian Pacific Environmental Network**

"The passage of AB 1628 shows the State's commitment to not only bring polluted communities to the environmental decision-making table, but also that these communities' recommendations will at least be meaningfully considered. I am hopeful that Governor Newsom will approve this new definition that will guide government decision-makers in taking action to achieve environmental justice."

— **Chelsea Tu, Senior Attorney, Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment**

"SB 160 sets a foundation for addressing the unique needs of culturally diverse communities - immigrants and refugees, LGBTQ+ folks, the elderly and disabled, among others - during disasters. Integrating their expertise in the planning process will ensure that emergency protocols are inclusive, safe, and affirming for everyone."

— **Amee Raval, Senior Policy Researcher, Asian Pacific Environmental Network**

Unfortunately, AB 995 (C. Garcia) a bill that would have enacted accountability, transparency, and oversight measures at the Department of Toxic Substances Control did not advance this year. It would have created a board to grant additional oversight of DTSC's programmatic and fiscal functions to fulfill its mandate to protect the health and safety of residents from toxic exposure.

"AB 995 would have helped ensure financial sustainability at the Department of Toxic Substance Control to help the agency protect communities, particularly low-income communities and communities of color, from the health and environmental impacts of hazardous waste. We hope that the Administration and the Legislature will work together during the legislative interim along with environmental and environmental justice organizations to provide the necessary oversight for this historically mismanaged agency. This type of reform is decades overdue and we look forward to collaborating with all the stakeholders involved."

— **Ingrid Brostrom, Assistant Director, Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment**

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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.  
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