

January 7, 2020

Governor Gavin Newsom
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom,

On the anniversary of your first year in office, we urge you to take bolder action in line with the urgency of the climate emergency that faces California and the world. While you have taken some steps to address oil and gas in our state, they fall far short of what is needed to confront the climate crisis. We appreciate your pledge to move the state off of fossil fuels, but California needs to take audacious action before it is too late. Our future depends on whether or not you rise to this challenge.

This past November, 11,000 climate scientists issued a report finding that the world “clearly and unequivocally faces a climate emergency.” We see this in California, with the combined effects of fires, mudslides, droughts and power shut offs.

To that end, we call on you to immediately declare a climate emergency, which would include issuing an immediate moratorium on new fossil fuel permits, banning fracking, shutting down the dangerous Aliso Canyon gas storage facility, instituting buffer zones to protect communities and addressing the PG&E debacle with a clear plan for public power.

Moratorium on New Fossil Fuel Permits: As you acknowledge, if we are going to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, we need to phase out oil production in California. To do this, the first step is to stop *expanding* production. Yet, during your first year, new drilling permits continued to increase. Your recent moratorium on high pressure cyclic steam drilling, pending a study on how to regulate or prohibit this practice, sets an important precedent. However, this action will only affect three oil fields in Kern County. Notably, the moratorium does not cover regular cyclic steam drilling or a whole host of other unconventional drilling methods. For example, the proposed 667 new wells that would use cyclic steam drilling in Cat Canyon, in North Santa Barbara County, would be unaffected by this moratorium. Further, your 2019-2020 budget allocated \$1.5 million to study phasing out fossil fuels in California. The intention to create a set of strategies to this end while identifying resources that can address the economic needs of low income fenceline communities and potentially displaced fossil industry workers is important, but it should not stop you from taking action to address the expanding industry today. **As Governor, you can take meaningful action by immediately stopping all new oil and gas drilling permits to protect community health, water and the climate.**

Ban Fracking: Fracking and extreme drilling continue to expand oil production in California, threatening communities and the environment. As a candidate, you promised to oppose fracking and unconventional drilling. However, while states like New York, Maryland,

Washington, and Oregon have banned or placed a moratorium on the process, you have yet to do so. After it was revealed that fracking permits increased in your first months in office, you instituted a de facto moratorium and fired the head of DOGGR. This was great news and we were hopeful. However, your new order in late November called for a study of fracking, and more significantly, directed the backlog of permits to be reviewed for potential approval by scientists from Lawrence Livermore National Lab. Creating a different process for approving fracking permits is not the same as stopping them. **You should use your executive authority to immediately put a halt on fracking and unconventional, dangerous drilling.**

Shut Down Aliso Canyon: As a candidate and as Governor, you promised to shut down the Aliso Canyon gas storage facility, yet the dangerous gas field remains open. Nearly a year into your tenure, you asked the California Public Utilities Commission to study permanently closing Aliso Canyon. Yet, another study without a deadline simply kicks the can down the road while neighboring families suffer from the effects of toxic emissions. In fact, under your administration SoCalGas has increased withdrawals from Aliso Canyon, taking advantage of relaxed regulations by the CPUC. **As Governor, it is up to you to set a deadline of no more than a year to shut down Aliso Canyon. You can do this through an Executive Order directing your agencies to take swift action.**

Protecting Communities from Oil and Gas Drilling with Public Health Setbacks: You announced a rule-making process to strengthen public health protections relating to oil production, including a potential human health and safety buffer. We strongly endorse establishing a 2500-foot buffer -- based on a precautionary approach and the best available science -- that would prohibit new drilling and phase out existing wells within 2500 feet of sensitive land uses. After decades of neglect, protecting communities -- overwhelming low income people and people of color -- living fenceline to oil and gas production should be a priority first step in a broader fossil fuel phase out plan. However, implementation is left to the new head of CalGEM, the former petroleum administrator for Los Angeles, who recommended a paltry 600-foot buffer -- not nearly enough to protect communities. **Anything less than a 2500-foot buffer zone would fly in the face of science showing that families living closest to these sites bear serious health risks.**

Public Power: PG&E had already filed bankruptcy when you entered office, leaving the future of the largest utility in California open to massive change. Midway through your first year, you backed SB1054 designed to bail out PG&E shareholders from wildfire liabilities. Then, as power shut offs increased and PG&E-induced fires raged, you indicated that public power should be a backup option to overhauling PG&E's current corporate model. The PG&E debacle is the worst case scenario showing why we can no longer rely on investor owned utilities. Still, you keep throwing lifelines to a failing system that lacks accountability, prioritizes corporate profits over human needs and has inherently higher costs for ratepayers. **In 2020, you can make public power your first priority for PG&E restructuring, helping to ensure lower rates, more public accountability and that public safety and clean energy are the top priorities.**

We urge you to step up efforts to tackle climate change and community health in your second year in office. Taking the steps we suggest would demonstrate the climate leadership our state so desperately needs and would make California an example to the world.

Sincerely,

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