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Fracking Bans Win in Two California Counties, Fail in One

Gross Spending Helped Oil Industry Mislead Public in Santa Barbara County

SACRAMENTO—Voters in two California counties were able to overcome a Goliath of an opponent—the oil industry—and pass fracking bans yesterday by wide margins. Measure J in San Benito County passed with 57% of the vote, and Measure S in Mendocino County passed with 67%.

However, Measure P in Santa Barbara County, which was very similar to the San Benito measure, lost after oil industry groups spent more than \$7.6 million to beat the measure placed on the ballot by local grassroots groups. That spending ranked the local ballot measure campaign in Santa Barbara as one of the most expensive in the country. The oil industry's campaign relied heavily on advertising that misled voters about the measure's content, and outspent proponents by more than 20 to 1.

This election cycle was marked by extraordinary oil industry spending to influence elections in California. Oil interests ran independent expenditure campaigns against at least two Southern California assembly members, and one Bay Area candidate for the state senate. Oil companies also gained national attention for their efforts to influence city council elections in Richmond, California, spending more than \$3 million on that local election. Oil companies also spent nearly \$2 million to unsuccessfully challenge the fracking ban measure in San Benito County.

Just days before the election, 7th quarter lobbying filings for the two-year legislative session were released. They showed that the Western States Petroleum Association (WSPA), the lead trade association for oil companies, spent more than \$4 million to influence legislators during the period including July, August and September this year, the last three active months of the legislative session. That compares to \$1.7 million the group spent during the 6th quarter.

Statement by Kathryn Phillips, Director of Sierra Club California, in response to the Measure P loss:

“Winning two out of three county fracking ban measures on the ballot in California is great news for every Californian who wants clean air, clean water and a safe future for the next generation.

“We knew the oil industry would spend a lot this election. It has given every indication that it is determined to continue business as usual, and is unwilling to change its polluting practices, even as the rest of the world faces the extremes of climate disruption caused by continued oil dependence. And as we have seen by recent shutdown orders of injection wells used to dispose of fracking fluid in California, the oil industry is unable to conduct fracking without polluting.

“History is on our side. Sierra Club members are inspired by the voters of San Benito County and Mendocino County, and the good citizens in Santa Barbara County who have shown such strong commitment to social and environmental progress. Fracking will end in California. This election shows that, in the absence of a statewide moratorium, Californians are prepared to force that end in their own communities.”

Sierra Club California is the legislative and regulatory advocacy arm of the 13 Sierra Club chapters in California, representing more than 380,000 members and supporters statewide.