



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 16, 2022

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**Newsom Mandates Nation's Largest and Strongest Buffer Zone Between  
Polluting Oil Wells and Communities**

*California's Frontline Communities Celebrate An End to Neighborhood Drilling After  
Decades-Long Battle for Environmental Justice*

VALLEJO, CA - Today Governor Newsom signed into law SB 1137, a bill that will mandate a 3,200-foot setback between oil drilling and homes, schools and other sensitive receptors. Standing in front of the new solar array at the USDA Forest Service Region Headquarters, Newsom made a historic commitment to end California's dark legacy of urban oil extraction that [overwhelmingly impacts](#) non-white and low-income communities. A history of housing discrimination and redlining in the state made neighborhood oil drilling one of the clearest examples of environmental racism in California. This new law will not only prohibit new drilling within the setback zone but will apply stringent pollution controls to operators and further prohibit them from reworking existing wells—essentially phasing out all operations within the setback zone over the coming years.

An overwhelming body of evidence shows that proximity to industrial fossil fuel operations increases exposure to known carcinogens and endocrine disruptors, fine and ultra-fine particulate matter that can shorten life expectancy, cause birth complications and increase risks for cancer, asthma and other respiratory illnesses. Over the last decade, frontline communities have led the movement calling on local and state legislators to establish a buffer zone between toxic oil wells and their homes, schools, parks and workplaces. From knocking on neighbors' doors to document the unexplained nosebleeds and headaches, to organizing headline-grabbing protests with international climate activists, the fight for setbacks has been a grassroots effort with the most impacted Californians tirelessly advocating for their health and safety.

"Four years ago, the small city of Arvin in Kern County made history passing the state's first local setback ordinance of 300ft. Today, the same communities that fought for Arvin's protective setbacks carried the fight to the finish line and celebrated the passage of 3,200ft setbacks statewide. While we know this distance is just the bare minimum needed to protect our communities, we are proud of our environmental justice communities that paved the way for this historic victory," said **Nayamin Martinez, Executive Director, Central California Environmental Justice Network.**



“California’s politicians have finally listened. We’re glad the legislature and the Governor have at last taken necessary action for setbacks. Today’s monumental win belongs to frontline communities who’ve been fighting for setbacks for years, and it’s a big indicator that the tide is turning on Big Oil in Sacramento,” said **Dr. Catherine Garoupa White, Executive Director, Central Valley Air Quality Coalition.**

Last October, Gov. Newsom [announced](#) that his agency, the Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM), had released a proposed regulation that would prohibit new wells and facilities within 3,200 feet of communities. Environmental justice advocates and frontline community members were deeply engaged in the agency’s rulemaking process for years but doubtful that the troubled regulator, with a history of financial ties to the fossil fuel industry, would move at the speed required to address the ongoing threat of neighborhood drilling. But an [end-of-session proposal](#) by Gov. Newsom to include setbacks in a suite of climate priorities led Sens. Lena Gonzalez (D-Long Beach) and Monique Limón (D-Santa Barbara) to carry SB 1137 across the finish line this legislative session. Although two similar bills had previously died in the legislature, senate and assembly champions worked hard to secure the votes this round and Gov. Newsom also visited the Capitol speaking to Dems in both chambers with a plea for setbacks.

“This legislation marks a true turning point in California’s history and in our nation’s fight against climate change and decade’s worth of environmental injustices faced by our frontline communities. Our planet is warming, and that is simply an undeniable truth; but with bold actions like SB 1137 we can still catch up in the race to stop this crisis,” said **Senator Lena Gonzalez (D-Long Beach)**. “With the combined stress of global warming and proximity to oil and gas production wells, it is our frontline communities that carry the heaviest burden with their already increased risk of asthma, heart disease and cancer. That is the reality and the severity of the public health challenges that pollution-burdened communities face daily across our state, and SB 1137 will help us change that. This is only the beginning—I believe SB 1137 will be a catalyst for more meaningful climate action in the near future. It has been an honor to work alongside the many dedicated environmental community advocates and organizations who helped push this legislation forward, and with my Senate colleague, Senator Monique Limon, who helped author SB 1137. Thank you to all my colleagues in the Legislature for their support and to Governor Newsom for signing this historic bill into law.”

The effects of climate change have never been more apparent across California with deadly heat, drought and extreme fires threatening a livable future in the state. Today’s historic bill signing will personally impact the lives of [3 million Californians](#) living within 3,200 feet of toxic oil operations. It also marks a decisive step toward phasing out the worst and dirtiest fossil fuels on the path to the Governor’s goal of a complete phase out of in-state fossil fuel operations. Alongside the unprecedented investments in regional economic development to create good, sustainable, family supporting union jobs, as well as programs targeted to support displaced oil workers, California takes a definitive step toward a future beyond oil.



“Finally, after years and years of environmental justice communities fighting for comprehensive public health setbacks, the legislature and the Governor are taking action. Today, California is committing in statute to phase out the scourge of neighborhood drilling in our communities. The signing of SB 1137 into law is not only historic--it will save lives,” said **Dan Ress, Staff Attorney, Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment.**

"The signing of SB 1137 is a historic moment not just in California history, but for the incredible visionary leadership of the environmental justice movement worldwide. By signing the bill into law, the Governor is beginning to put an end to the harm that Big Oil has inflicted on our state's frontline communities for decades. VISION is grateful for the Governor's signature, and for the support of our advocates in the legislature, Senator Gonzalez and Senator Limón, who carried this bill and the multi-year campaign behind it over the finish line,” said **Kobi Naseck, Coalition Coordinator, Voices in Solidarity Against Oil in Neighborhoods**

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