

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

August 22, 2018

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.  
Governor, State of California  
State Capitol, First Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: The issuance of new permits for fossil fuel development and infrastructure**

Dear Governor Brown:

We respectfully urge you to announce an end to new fossil fuel projects in our state and a just transition plan ending California's existing oil and gas production. Given your leadership for countering the effects of climate change, we believe your upcoming Global Climate Action Summit in September presents a critical opportunity for California to continue driving transformational change.

In December 2015, nations of the world agreed in Paris to strive to limit global average temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Staying within these climate limits will require governments to immediately halt the approval of new fossil fuel extraction and transition away from fossil fuels. The potential carbon emissions from the oil, gas, and coal in the world's currently developed fields and mines would fully exhaust and exceed carbon budgets.

In April of this year, you received a letter from more than 750 environmental, health, justice, faith, labor, community, and consumer organizations from California and around the world, asking you to implement a plan to end permitting of new fossil fuel projects and phase out existing production. A just and equitable transition would protect workers, communities, and economies.

We strongly support that vision.

We need a just transition that ensures living wage jobs for the shrinking number of oil and gas workers. A plan to end new permitting must be accompanied by a very generous state investment to ensure economic security for these workers and also future work.

We regularly hear from constituents about the tremendous burdens that fossil fuel production places on our communities, especially low-income communities and communities of color. California is home to some of the country's most polluted air basins. The pollution from oil and gas field operations and refinery facilities is a major contributor to the array of air quality related health problems that hurt our most overburdened communities.

For example, there are more than 3000 oil wells in Los Angeles County alone. Many are less than 100 yards away from residential areas. A 2018 report from the Los Angeles County

Department of Public Health found that living near an oil well increases the risk for short and long-term health effects. California should enact a health and safety buffer and rapidly decommission oil and gas production within a half mile of residences.

Even Californians who do not live next to an oil well are threatened by oil extraction, transport, and refining. In Santa Barbara, a pipeline ruptured in May 2015, spilling over 140,000 gallons of crude oil, at least 21,000 gallons of which made it into the ocean. In Richmond, an explosion at the Chevron refinery in 2012 sent more than 15,000 people to emergency rooms.

Climate change resulting from the continued development of oil and gas would exacerbate drought conditions, wildfires, and flooding. According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, approximately 33,000 people in the San Francisco Bay Area are currently living in homes at risk of chronic inundation from sea level rise over the next 25 years – and by the year 2100, that number will increase to over 190,000 people.


Corporate interests continue to undermine our nation's leadership in the global fight against climate change. California will need to lead the way on limiting fossil fuel extraction just as we have led in the transition to renewable energy. What applies to California need not apply to every state.

California is best equipped to take the next bold step in addressing the challenges of climate change. Thanks in large part to your leadership, we have already demonstrated our state's ability to lead the way on climate action while benefiting our diverse and growing economy. California must continue its role as a laboratory for clean technology and carbon removal.

Ending the issuance of new permits for fossil fuel development and infrastructure will establish the standard for climate policy worldwide. Ending permits for new wells and enacting a health and safety buffer could keep 660 million barrels of oil, equivalent to 425 million metric tons of carbon pollution, in the ground through 2030.<sup>[1]</sup>

We believe that transformative climate leadership must include bold action on the production side of fossil fuels. As we look ahead toward the Global Climate Action Summit later this year, we urge you to take these necessary steps.

Respectfully,



Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

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<sup>[1]</sup>Trout, K. 2018. The Sky's Limit California: Why the Paris Climate Goals Demand that California Lead in a Managed Decline of Oil Production. Oil Change International, May 2018. Available at [priceofoil.org/2018/05/22/skys-limit-california-oil-production-paris-climate-goals/](http://priceofoil.org/2018/05/22/skys-limit-california-oil-production-paris-climate-goals/).