

Oil, Gas, and Fracking Phase-Outs Need to Speed Up

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On April 23, Governor Newsom issued a directive to ban new fracking permits by 2024. The statement also requests that the California Air Resources Board (CARB) assess how California can phase out all oil and gas drilling by 2045. If California were to do this, it would be the first oil-producing state to fully phase out oil and gas extraction.

While precedent setting, both timelines are not aggressive enough. They fail to meet the urgency of the climate crisis we face and protect frontline communities facing the brunt of fossil fuel pollution that still need immediate health and safety protections.

Moreover, California must establish a 2,500-foot buffer zone between dirty oil wells and our homes, schools, and other sensitive areas, a public health and environmental issue the Governor has promised to address in the past. CalGEM's rule process has been repeatedly delayed and needs expeditious action.

Last fall, Governor Newsom released an executive order that was meant to increase state action to cut climate pollution and respond to the climate crisis. In response, the Sierra Club together with leading climate and environmental justice groups [published an open letter](#) calling on the people of California to urge the governor to accelerate the state's transition off of fossil fuels, including ending the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure by not issuing new permits for oil and gas drilling, pipelines, and other facilities and accelerating a managed decline to phase out oil production.

Just prior to the governor's April 23 announcement, the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee failed to pass Senate Bill 467, a critical bill sponsored by environmental justice advocates and frontline communities that would have put California on a path to ban fracking and other dangerous oil and gas extraction technologies. The bill also would have mandated a 2,500-foot buffer zone between oil wells and homes, playgrounds, medical facilities, or schools. It came up short by just one vote.

“Governor Newsom acknowledging the need to phase out oil and gas extraction in California is a win for Californians,” said Brandon Dawson, Acting Director of Sierra Club California. “We need to move away from fossil fuels to best protect frontline communities and our unique, natural environment.”



“However, his directive falls short of a mandate. California needs prompt state action to confront the climate crisis. This means shortening the timeline for the fracking ban and requiring the phase-out of oil and gas production earlier. And glaringly absent from the order: a statewide setback rule. Setbacks from oil and gas wells are necessary to protect the health and safety of frontline communities.”

“Time is not a luxury we have to tackle a crisis of this scale. If the Governor is to continue to paint California as a pioneer in the transition away from fossil fuels, he’ll have to recognize this urgency and act swiftly.”