

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
May 18, 2015

Contact: Cyrus Reed, 512-740-4086, cyrus.reed@sierraclub.org
 Matt Johnson, 512-605-6376, matt.johnson@sierraclub.org

Sierra Club Statement on Governor Abbott Signing Pro-Polluter HB 40 Into Law

AUSTIN, Texas - Governor Greg Abbott signed the controversial HB 40 into law today. The statute strips away the right of cities and other local governments to protect their citizens from hazardous oil and gas operations. HB 40 was largely written by the oil and gas industry and affirms that all authority to regulate oil and gas activity in Texas lies with the Railroad Commission. Local authorities, such as the City of Denton, that attempt to prohibit or enact commonsense safeguards against hazardous oil and gas activity, will now be preempted by the Railroad Commission.

In response to Governor Abbott signing HB 40 into law today, Cyrus Reed, **Sierra Club Lone Star Chapter's Conservation Director**, issued the following statement:

“If the Railroad Commission does their job and regulates oil and gas effectively, as the bill’s sponsors claimed it does, Texans wouldn’t have had to take matters into their own hands in the first place. The agency’s inattentiveness to addressing the dangers associated with urban oil and gas operations is what led citizens to seek protection locally.

If they’re serious about being the only regulatory body for oil and gas in Texas, the Commission is going to need to fully fund a robust inspection division, with more staff, to help residents and businesses who can no longer seek help from their local governments. They will have to significantly adjust their structure to accommodate new constituencies beyond just the oil and gas companies. It would be a good start if the agency acknowledged the link between fracking wastewater wells and earthquakes, but they appear to be a long way off from doing anything like that.”

###