

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Monday, April 13, 2015

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Sierra Club Statement on HB 40, Arlington Gas Well Leak

AUSTIN, Texas – As the Texas House of Representatives prepares to vote on HB 40, which would take away the rights of communities and citizens to protect themselves against pollution and hazardous oil and gas drilling activities, a gas well leak in Arlington, Texas, forced surrounding neighborhoods to evacuate over the weekend.

A spokesperson for Vantage Energy said the company had just started the hydraulic fracturing or “fracking” process on the well when the fluid leak started Saturday.

HB 40 and its Senate counterpart SB 1165 assume adequate state oversight of oil and gas operations and would preempt municipalities from creating ordinances aimed at enabling communities to protect themselves against the dangerous practice of fracking. The bills, if passed, would also jeopardize existing local ordinances.

Cyrus Reed, Conservation Director of the Sierra Club’s Lone Star Chapter, issued the following statement in response to the two events:

“What happened over the weekend in Arlington is exactly why we shouldn't be undermining cities, counties and local fire departments by taking away their ability to safeguard against oil and gas industry activities. Arlington requires that these facilities carry insurance for exactly these types of situations, and a number of cities inspect blow-pit preventers in case of accident. These common-sense protections will go out the window if HB 40 becomes law.

Over the past four days, legislators have received almost 4,000 emails urging them to oppose HB 40 and SB 1165. We urge citizens to call their mayors immediately to ask them to formally oppose HB 40 and contact their representatives directly as well.”

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