

Why Sierra Club Endorses Gavin Newsom for Governor

In October 2017, Sierra Club California released a five-point document briefly outlining the characteristics we look for in the next governor of California. These characteristics are:

- Independence from the oil industry;
- Independence from the tobacco and e-cigarette industry;
- Demonstrated and sophisticated commitment to the environment and public health;
- Commitment to social and environmental equity; and
- Devotion to transparency, access and consultation.

After years of watching and working with Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom, and more recently discussing with him his vision and plans if he is elected governor, Sierra Club California's volunteer leadership determined that Newsom has the right mix of characteristics to deserve Sierra Club's enthusiastic endorsement.

Independence from Oil and Tobacco Money

For too long, the oil industry, with its seemingly bottomless supply of campaign donations, has had an out-sized influence on elected officials. California's environment and public health have suffered as a result. In recent years, it seems that every step forward to protect air quality or reduce climate pollution is accompanied by a step backward to satisfy the oil industry and capture the support of those elected officials so dependent on their funding.

The tobacco industry's hold on elected officials in California has waned over the years, but with the rise of e-cigarettes, there are new threats to public health and to elected officials' independence.

Gavin Newsom does not take money from the oil industry or tobacco industry. Indeed, he has taken positions on oil drilling that are more likely to make the oil industry target him than praise him.

Demonstrated Commitment to the Environment, Public Health and Environmental Equity

During his time as mayor of San Francisco, Newsom helped pass and implement a range of policies to advance environmental goals that lead the state. These included a 100% renewable energy target, a ban on plastic bags and foam containers, and mandatory composting.

As Lt. Governor, through his roles on key commissions, Newsom helped protect a Central Coast California fishery from decimation by underwater seismic blasts; shut down off-shore oil drilling from a platform off the coast of Santa Barbara, an action that also added new lands to the coastal sanctuary; and move forward a proposal to retire the last nuclear power plant in California.

Newsom says he is committed to continuing the state's leadership on clean energy and climate action and to further advance clean vehicles, including greater and broader electrification of vehicles. He has also wants to invest in areas of the environment and environmental policy implementation that have suffered in recent years, such as State Parks & Recreation and the Coastal Commission.

Newsom says he will make it a priority to address drinking water quality, so that everyone in California can drink clean, safe water from their faucets. He will safeguard policies that ensure that disadvantaged communities receive at least 35 percent of the funds that are generated by the state's cap-and-trade program to reduce climate pollution.

He says he will listen to impacted communities, environmental and environmental justice advocates.

Newsom embraces the notion of a 100 percent renewable energy portfolio in California and supports policies that will reduce dependence on natural gas, scale up energy storage, and encourage community choice in electricity to build local reliability.

The Sierra Club has not always aligned with all of Newsom's policy approaches in the past, including policies related to development in San Francisco during his time as mayor. However, on the whole, his demonstrated commitment to the environment, environmental equity and public health are strong and proven.

Devotion to Transparency, Access and Consultation

California needs a governor who is accessible and willing to reach out and confer with environmental and environmental justice representatives when designing policies. Gavin Newsom has committed to transparency, access and consultation about environmental policies.

Viability

We live in politically unpredictable times. It is more important than ever to take every election seriously and every candidate seriously. The current roster of candidates running for governor includes a number of smart elected or former elected officials who have strong environmental credentials. It also includes climate change deniers who are climbing in public opinion polls.

Strong environmental credentials are not worth anything if a candidate cannot win an election. In evaluating viability—that is, who will have the resources and endorsements and capacity to win—Newsom is the strongest of the environmentally aligned candidates running for governor.

Public opinion polls indicate that a substantial portion of likely voters have not yet decided on their candidate. We believe it is essential to select a strong candidate now, before the June election, to help signal to undecided Californians where they should place their vote if they want to make sure California has a leader who will protect the air, water, wildlands, wildlife and people of California during these environmentally challenging times.

Again, Sierra Club enthusiastically endorses Gavin Newsom for governor.