



COUNTY of VENTURA

April 5, 2021

The Honorable Monique Limón
Member of the Senate
State Capitol, Room 3092
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 47 (Limón) – Oil and gas: hazardous and idle-deserted wells and production facilities: expenditure limitation (As amended 3/15/2021) – SUPPORT
Set for hearing 4/13/2021 – Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee**

Dear Senator Limón:

On behalf of the Ventura County Board of Supervisors, I write in support on SB 47, your measure that would increase from \$1 million to \$10 million – beginning in 2022-23 and annually thereafter – the California Geologic Energy Management Division’s (CalGEM) expenditure authority for activities associated with plugging and remediating idle wells. Additionally, the measure would permit CalGEM to retain unspent funds up to \$100 million for purposes of addressing future abandoned well plugging and decommissioning activities.

An idle well is defined as a well that has been out of use for two years or more and has yet to be properly sealed and closed. Permanently plugging idle wells isolates potential contaminants and mitigates associated public health and environmental hazards. It is estimated that there are more than 2,000 idle and abandoned wells within the County. The Board of Supervisors has clear policy supporting legislative efforts that (1) develop a clear plan, timeline, and funding mechanism to adequately assure the reclamation of all oil sites and infrastructure and (2) set a finite time limit on the maintenance of oil wells in idle status.

SB 47 clearly aligns with the Board’s policy and vision for prioritizing the sealing of idle wells. Your measure would dedicate considerable but necessary resources to addressing deserted wells and mitigating associated public health and environmental risks. Under current law, CalGEM is authorized to spend up to \$3 million annually to remediate abandoned wells, but that expenditure authority – absent legislative action – would drop

to \$1 million in 2022-23. The increased annual expenditure cap beginning next fiscal year and the additional authority to set aside unspent funds to assure resources are available for inevitable future increases in deserted wells are justified and appropriate. The risk of leaks and resulting contamination are too great a threat to leave unaddressed. SB 47 offers a comprehensive, long-term solution to this problem.

Your measure represents a proactive, positive step in promoting proper remediation of idle gas and oil wells and reducing the potential for environmental risks. For these reasons, the County of Ventura is pleased to support SB 47. If there are questions about the County's position, I can be reached at ehe@hbeadvocacy.com or 916-272-0012. Thank you for your leadership on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Espinosa
Legislative Advocate

Cc: The Honorable Henry Stern, Chair, Senate Natural Resources and Water
Committee
Members and Consultants, Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee
Ventura County Delegation