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Kern County Backs Governor's Proposal to Certify Local Oil and Gas Environmental Review

Bakersfield, CA — Kern County today announced strong support for Governor Newsom's proposed legislation to stabilize California's transportation fuel market and ensure an affordable, reliable energy supply for all Californians. The legislation allows Kern's oil permitting ordinance to move forward immediately, supporting in-state oil production while upholding the state's highest environmental standards.

"Kern County is ready to be part of the solution," said Chair of the Kern County Board of Supervisors Leticia Perez. "As long as demand for petroleum remains, California needs local, responsibly produced oil to keep fuel prices stable and accessible for working families."

The bill would implement a key recommendation from Vice Chair Siva Gunda of the California Energy Commission's Petroleum Market Task Force by addressing long-standing delays in oil permitting. It affirms the legal sufficiency of Kern County's Oil and Gas Zoning Ordinance (Title 19, 2025-A) and its certified Final Second Supplemental Recirculated Environmental Impact Report (FSSREIR) under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This ordinance includes more than 100 mitigation measures to protect air quality, water, public health, and habitat.

"This legislation gives Kern County and the California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) the regulatory certainty to issue permits without further delay or risk of litigation," said Lorelei Oviatt, Director of the Kern County Planning and Natural Resources Department. "It does not exempt Kern County from CEQA—it ensures that our existing, court-tested environmental analysis is honored."

The bill contrasts with other provisions that would grant limited CEQA exemptions for oil well abandonment in counties outside Kern. In Kern, the County will continue using its comprehensive environmental review process and does not seek exemptions or waivers. The bill simply prevents ongoing legal challenges to a document already vetted and certified through 12 years of public process and court review.

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Kern County remains a cornerstone of California's energy future:

- Producing 80% of California's oil
- Hosting 70% of the state's wind and solar infrastructure
- Supporting 80% of in-state battery storage capacity

Over the past 15 years, Kern has attracted \$89 billion in private energy investment by balancing clean energy leadership with stable, locally managed permitting.

Governor Newsom and state energy leaders have called for urgent legislative action to support investor confidence, protect consumers, and advance the state's energy goals. This bill is a critical step in that direction, and Kern County is proud to lead with both environmental responsibility and energy reliability.

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