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Oil Industry Continues Efforts to “Buy” California’s Electoral System Environmental Groups Condemn Big Oil’s Activity in Two Key Legislative Races

Sacramento, Calif.—Recent campaign funding activities show that the oil industry, led by Chevron Oil, is continuing its past practice of trying to “buy” California voters to influence the outcome of legislative races.

The industry is investing in independent expenditure campaigns designed to target legislative candidates who have strong positions on environmental issues and articulate the need to cut air and water pollution from the oil and gas industry.

Specifically, Chevron Oil reported in April that it had formed an independent expenditure campaign and contributed \$1 million to woo voters in Assembly District 47, located in San Bernardino County. That contribution to the independent expenditure campaign is intended to deflect voter support for advocate and educator Eloise Reyes, a candidate for the Assembly who has strong backing from environmental and environmental justice groups.

Additionally, an independent expenditure campaign in Senate District 27, which includes parts of northern Los Angeles County and Ventura County, has been formed with funds from a political action committee heavily financed by Chevron Oil. That independent expenditure campaign is designed to undercut frontrunner Henry Stern, a policy adviser who helped craft successful legislation to contain oil and gas industry pollution while serving on Senator Fran Pavley’s staff.

“As Yogi Berra would say, this is déjà vu all over again,” said Kathryn Phillips, director of Sierra Club California. “Chevron did this kind of spending in 2012 to try to seat pro-oil Democrats. It’s not a new tactic, but it requires the public to be alert to the kinds of dishonest claims they will hear from the oil-backed campaigns.”

Even as oil prices fall, and oil industry giants like Chevron lay off thousands of workers, the companies are spending liberally to try to control California's political climate. In 2015, oil companies spent [\\$22 million to influence](#) legislation at the state Capitol, including efforts to undermine groundbreaking legislation to reduce oil-generated pollution in the state.

"The oil industry has decided to pour money into campaigns to stop candidates who have the public's and the environment's best interests at heart," said Sarah Rose, chief executive officer of the California League of Conservation Voters. "Our message to Californians who care about their health, their children's health, and the environment is to beware. Candidates who will lead on the environment have typically earned endorsements from environmental groups, *not* support from polluters like Chevron. Oil companies' spending in support of a candidate is a clear indication that candidate's record on the environmental and public health should be heavily scrutinized."

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Sierra Club California is the legislative and regulatory advocacy arm of the Sierra Club in California, representing nearly 380,000 members and supporters statewide. A grassroots volunteer-driven environmental organization, Sierra Club was founded in California in 1892.

The political muscle of the environmental movement in America's leading environmental state, the California League of Conservation Voters (CLCV) is the nation's oldest grassroots environmental political action organization. For more information visit www.ecovote.org.