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Sierra Club Praises Senate Pro Tem's Planned Legislation to Restore Southern California Air District's Focus

SACRAMENTO – Senate President Pro Tem Kevin de León announced Tuesday plans to introduce legislation to add three new seats to the South Coast Air Quality Management District to help refocus the agency on its mission to cut air pollution.

Last week, after oil-industry-backed members took seats on the board, giving the board majority to industry-backed members, the board voted 7 to 6 to dismiss the agency's long-time executive officer. The firing came with indications by some of the new majority that they intend to roll back regulations put in place to cut air pollution, including regulations governing oil industry pollution in the air basin.

The South Coast Air Quality Management District regulates stationary source polluters in Orange County and the urban portions of Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties. That region ranks among the top three most polluted air basins in the nation.

Statement from Kathryn Phillips, Director of Sierra Club California:

“Pro Tem de León's plan to add a public health voice and two environmental justice voices to the air district board is timely and desperately needed.

“One of the most important air pollution control agencies in the world is at risk of complete takeover by oil industry interests. The losers will be the people who breathe the air in Southern California, particularly in communities where oil refineries, oil drilling sites, and other large industrial polluting facilities are located. That oil industry effort must be stopped.

“Senator de León has proven, again, that he intends to help make sure Californians get clean air, no matter what powerful forces he has to challenge. We need and appreciate his leadership on this.”

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Sierra Club California is the legislative and regulatory advocacy arm of the 13 Sierra Club chapters in California, representing more than 380,000 members and supporters statewide.