



COUNTY *of* VENTURA

September 14, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 896 (Bennett) – Idle Gas and Oil Well Remediation – *Request for Signature*

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of the Ventura County Board of Supervisors, I write to respectfully request your signature on AB 896, Assembly Member Steve Bennett's measure that would grant additional authority to the Department of Conservation's Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) to address remediation of idle gas and oil wells.

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 Ventura County. The County of Ventura has clear policy supporting legislative efforts that (1) establish 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.

AB 896 would require the establishment of a collections unit within CalGEM and expand, under specified conditions, the Division's authority to impose a claim and lien upon property owned by any operator or responsible party of an oil or gas well. The measure also requires that notices be sent regarding idle well fees and that the state report specified information on its collection efforts.

AB 896 represents a proactive, positive step in facilitating actions by well operators and other responsible parties that will promote proper remediation of idle gas and oil wells and reduce the potential for environmental risks. For these reasons, we respectfully request your signature on this measure when it comes before you. Thank you for considering the County's perspective.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Espinosa
Legislative Advocate

Cc: The Honorable Steve Bennett, Member of the Assembly