MAYORS' STATEMENT SUPPORTING LOCAL CONTROL OF FRACKING

As leaders of our nation’s cities, we are strongly opposed to efforts by state legislatures, and state and federal officials limiting the ability of communities to protect themselves from the harms of industrial fracking.

This growing trend of preemption is alarming. Already, state legislatures in Texas, North Carolina and Oklahoma have passed legislation to pre-empt local laws, while earlier this year a measure that would have blocked local bans was narrowly defeated by a Florida state senate committee.

Our country continues to experience a rush of oil and gas drilling largely brought about by advances in fracking. This often occurs in residential areas, near homes, schools, and playgrounds in about 35 states. The Washington Post reports that more than 15 million Americans now live within a mile of a well that has been drilled since 2000. With scientific evidence showing major health and global warming impacts linked to oil and gas-related pollution, it’s vital our cities and localities are able to protect the public health and environment from fracking’s impacts.

In addition to the growing body of evidence around the wide range of health impacts from fracking, this form of oil and gas drilling imposes infrastructure burdens on local communities, from strained services to ruined roads. As with other extractive booms, the arrival and expansion of fracking operations has been correlated with a wide range of pressures on social services—including increases in fires, earthquakes, and traffic accidents. Other local impacts such as water and soil contamination and reduced property values are likely to persist long after the boom is gone.

It is no surprise that a growing number of communities are moving to halt or regulate fracking within their borders. The notion that our communities have the right to govern on issues and activities that threaten public health or the quality of life of their residents has a long tradition in law. This principle is the basis of public health ordinances and local land use rules, including zoning, which often involve trade-offs with property rights and other interests.

In light of the foregoing, we believe that all communities should have the right to decide whether, where, and how industrial fracking operations – including not only well pads, but waste disposal facilities and all related infrastructure – happen within their borders.

We urge our state and federal leaders to affirm the ability of localities to protect the health and quality of life of residents against the widespread expansion of industrial fracking into their communities. The best policy is to leave decisions over these local impacts to local governments and let the democratic will of their residents and other stakeholders be heard.

Signed,
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Hon. Deborah Robertson
Mayor, Rialto, CA

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Mayor, Elk Grove, CA

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Mayor, San Bruno, CA

Hon. John A. Mirisch
Mayor, Beverly Hills, CA

Hon. Lauren Meister
Mayor, West Hollywood, CA

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