



NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF
Senator Henry Stern
REPRESENTING SENATE DISTRICT 27



Senator Stern Statement on Decision to Increase Pressure and Use of Aliso Canyon

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Los Angeles – The California Public Utilities Commission (PUC) voted 4-0 to increase the natural storage capacity of the Aliso Canyon Natural Gas Storage Facility by over 20 percent. Currently, the facility is capped at 34 billion cubic feet (bcf) of natural gas storage, but the new decision will raise this to 41.16 bcf. Citing the possibility of an exceptionally cold winter season in Southern California, the PUC stated that natural gas demand could constrain supply, despite the state’s aggressive climate and energy goals.

“This is a big disappointment and a big step backwards,” said Stern. “The fact remains this facility possess a danger to the health and safety to thousands of people around the facility. Rationalizing away important state climate and energy goals in favor of profits over our future only makes matters worse for everyone when our true goal is the removal of fossil fuels as an energy source. We can and will do better than this.”

Six years ago, the Aliso Canyon Gas Storage Facility was the site of the largest known methane gas leak in the nation’s history. More than 100,000 metric tons of methane, a potent greenhouse gas, along with toxic chemical species were emitted into the atmosphere, forcing many families in the surrounding communities to temporarily evacuate in order to safeguard their health and well-being. In fact, some community members faced such high exposure to the gas and chemical species that they were forced to permanently relocate, causing undue hardship.

In a letter sent to the Commission before the vote, Stern stated:

“There are feasible, zero carbon, safer, and more affordable alternatives in the near- and medium-term to a more pressurized Aliso the faulted facility can and must be closed altogether.”

Governor Newsom recently announced a rulemaking to require setbacks and increased regulations for neighborhood oil and gas facilities. Some residents, along with Senator Stern, are hopeful that today’s decision does not signal the normalization of Aliso, but will instead serve as the first step in shifting away from Aliso and reducing gas demand in the City of Los Angeles, as well as in Los Angeles County and throughout the entire state. These efforts will be supported by funding assistance from the Build Back Better plan that is currently pending before Congress, which would help to accelerate the state’s pursuit of 100% clean energy by 2035.

“Today was a definite setback for the North San Fernando Valley and all of Los Angeles and California. I’m still worried about seismic risks and unresolved ongoing well integrity issues,” continued Stern. “But if this commission is serious about this merely being a temporary decision, then we need to see real action in the parallel proceeding. We need to see them make good on the Governor’s bold promise to close Aliso for good.”

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