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Coalition of Leading Conservation, Environmental Justice, and Labor Groups Launched to Protect the California Environmental Quality Act

Poll shows nearly 2/3 of California voters oppose weakening CEQA

Sacramento, Calif. – A coalition of civic, conservation, environmental justice, labor, preservation, and public health groups today announced the launch of CEQA Works. The new coalition is an effort to shield California’s landmark environmental law from radical reforms that would limit public input into land use planning, threaten public health, and weaken environmental protections. Participating organizations are committed to educating the state’s residents and legislators about the significant benefits the California Environmental Quality Act has brought to the state since it was enacted by Governor Ronald Reagan 43 years ago.

“Our state’s residents rely on the California Environmental Quality Act to protect the things they hold most dear: clean air, clean water, and the opportunity to have their say in planning decisions,” said Bruce Reznik, Executive Director of the Planning and Conservation League. “This landmark environmental quality law provides critical protections that enhance our quality of life and protect our natural resources.”

Still in its early stages, CEQA Works already includes many of the state’s most prominent advocacy organizations, including conservation groups such as the California League of Conservation Voters, Center for Biological Diversity, Planning and Conservation League, Natural Resources Defense Council, and Sierra Club California; labor organizations including the California Teamsters Public Affairs Council, State Building and Construction Trades Council, and United Food & Commercial Workers (UFCW); environmental justice groups like Communities for a Better Environment and the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment; and public interest groups including the League of Women Voters of California. It also includes dozens of smaller community-based groups from throughout the state such as Save Mount Diablo, Sierra Watch, and Friends of Northern San Jacinto Valley, to name a few. To see a full list of endorsers, go to: <http://ceqaworks.org/who-we-are/>.

“Through the California Environmental Quality Act we have ensured that the most up to date and efficient technology has been used to create sustainable development,” said Cesar Diaz, Legislative Director for State Building and Construction Trades Council of California. “We have worked with developers and owners to utilize air cooled systems which save millions of acre feet of precious California water. While these systems are initially more expensive, over time they provide savings for ratepayers, improve environmental quality, and provide long-term efficiencies and cost savings. These conversations were made possible only because of CEQA.”

Some in Sacramento have called for weakening the law’s key tenets. However, a recent poll conducted by Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) on behalf of CEQA Works showed that 64% of California voters oppose weakening CEQA.

“The environment is not just something that we can hike through on the weekends—it’s also critical for ensuring vibrant and healthy urban communities. The California Environmental Quality Act is one of the few tools low income and communities of color have to protect the places where we live, work, learn, and play. We cannot allow big corporations and government to strip away the right to participate in decisions that shape our communities,” said Martha Dina Arguello, Executive Director of Physicians for Social Responsibility – Los Angeles.

To learn more about CEQA Works and to see a full list of organizations that have endorsed the effort, go to www.ceqaworks.org. To connect with spokespeople and get information about CEQA success stories in your area, please contact Severn Williams at sev@publicgoodpr.com, 510-336-9566.

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