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May 13, 2022

Dear Member of the League of Women Voters of Ventura County,

On Monday, May 9, 2022, our Board of Directors held a special meeting regarding Measures A & B on the June ballot.

At this meeting the ad hoc Action Committee on Measures A & B (Doris Simmelink, Carol Lindberg, Susan King Roth, Wayne Morgan, and Matty Park) presented their research and analysis to the Board. The Board then voted to "take a position of YES on Measures A & B for the June 7 Primary Election, and that we actively explain the League positions under which we take this stand."

The League has been hosting candidate forums for this election, and we intended to have a "Pros" and Cons" forum for Measures A & B. When we tried to arrange this, the "Yes" campaign agreed to participate, but after weeks of outreach to the "No" campaign they still had not provided a date or a spokesperson, so we decided to research these measures ourselves and present our findings to the public.

We found that the origin of these measures was at the Board of Supervisors' meeting on April 9, 2019, when Supervisor Bennett noted that there was a report (US Geologic Survey done in Feb 2019) that indicated they had found some gases leaking into a water well, and he tasked the Planning Commission to research those reports and develop some recommendations. In a meeting on July 30, 2020, the Planning Commission presented their findings and recommended that ordinances be updated to upgrade "antiquated" permits to follow the same procedures as "modern" permits. The amended ordinances were adopted by the Board of Supervisors in their November 2020 meeting in a 3-2 vote.

After these amendments were adopted, the oil companies - Aera Energy (owned by affiliates of Exxon-Mobil and Shell) and Chevron - immediately spent \$1 million on gathering signatures to block the new rules. When enough signatures were gathered, the Board of Supervisors had the choice either to rescind the new rules or to put them on the ballot as a referendum for the voters. They chose to put them on the ballot.

Measures A & B represent those blocked amendments to coastal (A) and non-coastal (B) zoning ordinances that were originally passed by the Board of Supervisors in November 2020 to require environmental review on ALL **NEW** oil and gas development, regardless of the date on their permit. This closes a loophole that currently allows new oil and gas development without environmental review on land with pre-1970 permits ("antiquated"), while all new oil and gas development on land with post-1970 permits ("modern") must have an environmental review.

Celebrating Over 60 Years in Ventura County

<https://my.lwv.org/california/ventura-county> email: info@lwvventura.org

Mailing address: P.O. Box 6786, Ventura, CA 93006

All contributions to LWV VC are tax deductible, Fed EIN # 95-2573486, effective date 12/30/16.

Measures A & B do not affect existing wells unless they are drilled deeper, and they explicitly exclude maintenance or anything covered by vested rights. These measures make the permitting process and environmental standards consistent for all new oil and gas development.

As we researched the “Yes” and “No” arguments it became apparent that the “No” campaign based their campaign on the assumption that these measures would shut down oil and gas production in Ventura County – which is untrue. These ordinances do not affect existing wells. They also cast these measures as a “political power grab” by the Board of Supervisors – which is also untrue. It is the job of the elected Board of Supervisors to manage zoning regulations for the environmental, health, and economic benefit of the people of Ventura County. The Supervisors followed a lengthy, transparent process where experts and members of the public were able to provide their input. All concerns were given consideration and, when possible, addressed in the final version.

The “Yes” arguments are based on the **potential** for oil drilling to leak and contaminate nearby water sources, although no water contamination specifically attributed to oil drilling has been found at this time. They also express concern about air contamination from gases released into the air from oil drilling or oil wells in residential areas, and the **likelihood** of increased respiratory illnesses in people living close to the drilling; the “antiquated” permits do not require any designated set-back from schools or houses which the “modern” permits do require.

We consulted with the Advocacy Director for LWV California (who is also a LWVUS Natural Resources Director) for guidance. She advised us to be even-handed and factual in our analysis, and that a local league may take a position on a ballot measure as long as that position is supported by an approved US, CA or local League position. An ‘Action Committee’ does the research and reports to the Board. Then the Board, which is elected by the membership, votes on whether or not to take a position.

Our research suggests that the voters are being misled by the ‘No’ campaign. Voters are reaching out to us for guidance. So our ad hoc Action Committee presented its findings to the Board, and the Board voted to support “Yes” on Measures A & B.

A “YES” vote means you support the coastal and non-coastal zoning ordinances passed by the Board of Supervisors.

A “NO” vote means you do NOT support the coastal and non-coastal zoning ordinances passed by the Board of Supervisors.

Soon we will post our support of “Yes on A & B” on our website and other social media, along with our research and analysis, and take other actions to communicate our support to the voters.

Please call or write if you have any comments or questions.

We encourage you to share this information with family and friends.

Betsy Patterson, President
League of Women Voters of Ventura County
805-798-4685

See League Positions supporting our decision on the next page

Supporting LWVUS Positions from “Impact on Issues – A Guide to Public Policy Positions”

<https://www.lwv.org/impact-issues>

Resource Management & Protection – Page 12

Promote the management of natural resources as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems.

Promote resource conservation, stewardship, and long-range planning, with the responsibility for managing natural resources shared by all levels of government. Preserve the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of the ecosystem with maximum protection of public health and the environment.

Air Quality

Promote measures to reduce pollution from mobile and stationary sources.

Water

Support measures to reduce pollution in order to protect surface water, groundwater, and drinking water, and set up a process to evaluate inter-basin water transfers.

Representative Government – Page 10

Promote an open governmental system that is representative, accountable and responsive.

Citizen Rights to Know/ Public Participation

Protect the citizen’s right to know and facilitate informed understanding and public participation in government decision-making.