

FAITH LEADERS SIGN ON LETTER

Dear Governor Brown,

Compelled by conscience and by our moral obligation to our communities of faith, to the health and safety of all Californians, to the wellbeing of future generations, and to our living ecosystems on which all present and future economic vitality depends, we, the undersigned interfaith leaders, request your immediate intervention to halt the toxic practice of hydrofracking and the other industrial practices associated with unconventional oil extraction in California by placing a moratorium on all enhanced stimulation techniques.

In making this appeal, we recognize and appreciate your outspoken leadership on climate change and dedication to a renewable energy future for California. However, it is our faith that teaches us that consistency in action is important. Simply put, Governor Brown, your commitment to environmental leadership is undercut by your support of fracking, which is a threat to the climate, a threat to public health, and a destroyer of California's precious water resources in a time of record-breaking and ruinous drought. Hence, we ask you to further your commitment to the environmental principles for which you have fought so admirably by protecting communities from fracking and so honoring the water, air and soil upon which we all depend. For when these sacred resources are fouled, nothing remains to sustain life.

In multiple ways, unconventional methods of enhanced oil extraction threaten the natural systems on which all life depends.

First, when burned, the oil extracted by fracking and other enhanced stimulation techniques releases into our atmosphere large amounts of carbon dioxide, the primary agent of climate change over the long-term. Drilling and fracking operations also leak methane gas, which, our scientists tell us, is the most potent heat-trapping gas over the short-term. In a time of climate emergency, further investments in fracking-related infrastructure will lock in decades of climate pollution and further injure our climate system in ways that compromise the rights of future generations to life, liberty, and personal security. As faith leaders, we are mindful that the climate crisis places unequal burdens on the world's poor, who are already suffering increased rates of sickness, death, and displacement as a result of human-induced climate change. Those who come after us will not benefit economically from fracking but will be forced to bear the costs.

Second, we are deeply troubled that oil and gas extraction via fracking relies on toxic techniques that have yet to be fully studied and that remain shrouded by industry secrecy and legal loopholes. A stream of reports about the health impacts from fracking continues to emerge from communities where these extraction techniques have been implemented. These reports, published in the medical and public health literature, contain no reassurances that oil extraction via fracking can be implemented safely—under any regulatory or best practices framework. To the contrary, the emerging science suggests that unconventional oil and gas extraction technologies pose undeniable, irremediable risks to our water, air, land and food. And fracking is now also implicated in exacerbating earthquake risk, which in an earthquake prone state like California should be sufficient reason in and of itself to immediately halt the practice.

We are especially alarmed at the growing body of evidence from other states that shows associations between shale gas drilling and fracking operations and harm to infants born to mothers who live near them. These injuries variously include low birth weight, congenital heart disease, and birth defects. We are concerned that California's methods of fracking for oil—acidization, cyclical

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steam injection, gravel packing and others—may pose additional risks for human health that remain entirely unstudied.

Third, we have abiding concerns about water, which is life itself. In all religions and spiritual practices, water is a sacred medium. From the raindrops that flow through our bloodstream and the photosynthesizing leaves of our food crops to the steam of our exhaled breath that rises back to the clouds, it is water that connects us to all of creation. Any form of energy extraction that intentionally poisons and permanently removes from hydrologic cycle large amounts of precious freshwater is a harmful, desecrating technology. And to exchange life-giving water for climate-damaging oil at a time when eighty percent of California suffers under extreme drought is simply unconscionable.

Governor Brown, we must be unequivocal in our shared responsibility as leaders. Quite literally, these methods of industrial extraction and their toxic and destabilizing consequences put the future of this planet - the one that we have inherited and are charged with protecting - in peril.

We respect the need to create jobs, but we also recognize the moral imperative to create meaningful employment opportunities that don't threaten the health of workers, pollute communities, or jeopardize the planet's future. The toxic, climate-damaging, water-destroying practice of fracking is on a collision course with life itself—and thus, with long-term economic vitality. If we allow the oil industry to continue to drive our energy policy, we will find ourselves on a sideways skid, crashing into a dystopian future. We believe that our political leaders must have the courage of their convictions to create jobs that help usher us toward a renewable energy future that respects our collective obligation to future generations.

This is no easy task. In the recent words of His Holiness Pope Francis, "This is one of the greatest challenges of our time: to convert ourselves to a type of development that knows how to respect creation." All faith traditions agree on this central belief: our role is to serve as stewards and comport ourselves as caretakers of the natural world. The Quakers who recently divested from oil and coal based utilities said, "The consequences of unchecked climate change can be described as a theft from our children... Climate instability threatens every society on Earth and the natural systems on which they depend." From the Jewish Midrash commentary on the Bible, "Do not corrupt or destroy my world; for if you do, there will be no one to repair it after you." And from a tradition you know well, the abbot of the Zen Center of New York, Geoffery Arnold said, "The environment is all around us. We can't pretend that it's not being affected by our lifestyles. We can't pretend that we don't see our part in its destruction. If we, as spiritual practitioners, are not able to answer the call, then who will?"

Governor Brown, we implore you, as a person of faith, who has invested much of your life in spiritual matters, to align your actions with the spiritual principals you have studied. Although there will always be powerful voices who seek to justify pillaging, exploitive practices as a means of economic advancement, there must also be leaders who stand against this destruction and stand for life-affirming economic development that will protect that which cannot be replaced.

For all these reasons, we ask you to rise to this great moral challenge - probably the most significant of your career, and one that you have long been preparing for - and declare a moratorium on fracking and other extreme methods of well stimulation and unconventional oil and gas extraction in California.

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In shared vision of a livable planet,

Full Name _____

*Include any prefixes such as Rabbi, Father, etc.

Title _____

Faith Institution/Organization _____

Denomination _____

I am signing-on on behalf of (mark one)

Myself – and my affiliation will be used for identification purposes only

My Institution/Organization

Email _____

*(for our purposes only to confirm signatories)

Phone _____

*(for our purposes only if we need to reach out)

City/Town _____

Zip Code _____

State (if different from CA) _____

Select any activities you wish to be involved in.

I would like to host a movie screening of Backyard, Gasland, or another related educational film.

I will host a meeting with my congregation about fracking.

I will help reach out to other faith leaders to recruit them to sign onto this statement

Once completed, please mail completed form to:

David Braun
Californians Against Fracking
1814 Franklin Street, Suite 1100
Oakland, CA 94612

If you have questions, please email organizers@californiansagainstfracking.org

Alternatively, you can sign onto this letter by going to www.californiansagainstfracking.org and clicking on the Take Action tab.