



## SB 342 (Gonzalez) South Coast Air Quality Management District Board Environmental Justice Representation

### SUMMARY

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Senate Bill (SB) 342 will empower community involvement and promote equity by adding two environmental justice representatives to the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) governing board.

Specifically, SB 342 will add two new representatives, one appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules, and one by the Speaker of the Assembly, who must reside in and work directly with communities in the South Coast air basin that are disproportionately burdened by high levels of pollution and issues of environmental justice. Finally, SB 342 authorizes the SCAQMD to create a six-person Labor Advisory Panel composed of representatives whose members perform work in the South Coast Air Basin to provide input on issues impacting labor in the South Coast Air Basin.

### BACKGROUND/PROBLEM

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Local air districts and their governing boards have primary jurisdiction over air pollution from all stationary sources in their air basin.

As prescribed by state law, the SCAQMD board is made up of 13 members, where three are appointed by the state (one each by the Senate Rules Committee, the Speaker of the Assembly, and the Governor) and 10 are appointed by local governments. The members of the board serve four-year terms.

South Coast air basin, despite significant air quality improvements over the last several decades, has some of

the worst air quality in the nation. The South Coast Air basin is home to many commercial establishments such as auto body shops, metal manufacturing facilities, oil and gas extraction sites, and other industrial land sites, freeways and high-volume thoroughfares, which emit harmful gases and particles. These pollution sources are often concentrated in historically disadvantaged communities where the elevated local air pollution interacts with other socio-economic and environmental determinants of health, significantly impacting the health and well-being of residents.

Fine particulate pollution poses an especially critical health danger for children, the elderly, and people with existing health problems. Exposure to particulate matter 2.5 is also linked to cardiovascular disease. The California Air Resources Board (ARB) estimates that in California, 9,000 deaths a year, 7,200 premature deaths, 1,900 hospitalizations, and 5,200 emergency room visits are attributed to particulate matter pollution exposure<sup>1,2</sup>. Further, evidence shows that people with low incomes may face higher risk from air pollution, and studies have found that Latinos, Asians, American Indians/Alaska Natives and especially African Americans experienced higher risks of harm—including premature death—from exposure to air pollution<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> California Air Resources Board. Health & Air Pollution. <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/resources/health-air-pollution>

<sup>2</sup> Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. Criteria air pollutants - toxicology and environmental assessment. County of Los Angeles. <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh/tea/toxicepi/criteriaairpollutants.htm#:~:text=A%20recent%20study%20by%20the,9%2C000%20deaths%20in%20California%20annually>

<sup>3</sup> American Lung Association, State of the Air 2020 report, <https://www.stateoftheair.org/assets/SOTA-2020.pdf>

Given the disproportionate health and environmental impacts of air pollution on low-income and communities of color, the state has passed legislation to increase access, promote inclusion and diversity, and incorporate environmental justice representatives to air quality boards. For example, AB 1288 (Atkins, Chapter 586, Statutes of 2015) expanded the Board membership of ARB from 12 to 14 members, and required that those members be persons who work directly with pollution-burdened and vulnerable communities.

In 2019, the Legislature passed and Governor signed AB 423 (Gloria, Chapter 744, Statutes of 2019), which revamped the governing board of the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District, and among other things added three new representatives from the public, with designated expertise as a public health professional, an air pollution specialist, and an environmental justice expert.

#### **SOLUTION**

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Communities in the South Coast air basin face historic, and multiple, synergistic and cumulative environmental health stressors. Appointing members to the SCAQMD board that will represent and work directly with their communities will drive significant changes to protect the well-being of people in that community. In addition, access to membership on boards provides a path to other positions in governmental leadership to individuals from historically underrepresented populations.

By adding two environmental justice representatives to SCAQMD's governing board, SB 342 will help tip the scales towards justice for communities that are disproportionately impacted by outdoor pollution in the South Coast air basin and incorporate diverse viewpoints on local public resources and air quality policies. It is now that we need to deliberately include environmental justice voices and establish active long-term community representation, as we struggle to meet federal air quality standards and tackle one of our most pressing health equity issues.

#### **SUPPORT**

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Active San Gabriel Valley  
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments  
Asian Pacific Environmental Network  
Audubon California

Better World Group  
Black Women for Wellness  
California Against Waste  
California Environmental Justice Alliance  
California Environmental Voters  
California Interfaith Power and Light  
California Institute for Biodiversity  
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Stockton  
Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice  
Center on Race, Poverty, and the Environment  
Clean Water Action  
Coalition for Clean Air  
Communities for a Better Environment  
Courage California  
Earthjustice  
East Yards Communities for Environmental Justice  
Environmental Defense Fund  
Environment Health Coalition  
Esperanza Community Housing Corporation  
Friends Committee on Legislation of California  
Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks  
Heal the Bay  
Holman United Methodist Church  
Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability  
Liberty Hill Foundation  
Lutheran Office of Public Policy- California  
National Parks Conservation Association  
Natural Parks Conservation Association  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
Pacoima Beautiful  
People's Collective for Environmental Justice  
People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights  
Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR)- Los Angeles  
PSR SF Bay Chapter  
Redeemer Community Partnership  
Safe Routes Partnership California  
San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Sierra Club California  
STAND-LA Coalition  
SCOPE Strategic Community Agenda  
The Climate Center  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
Voices for Progress  
350 Bay Area Action  
39 Health Professionals

#### **CONTACT**

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