



CALIFORNIA:

Fracking moratorium heads to state Senate floor

Debra Kahn, E&E reporter
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California state lawmakers moved closer to placing a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing and other forms of well stimulation last week with a bill's passage through a key committee.

The Senate Appropriations Committee voted Friday to advance S.B. 1132, by state Democratic Sens. Holly Mitchell and Mark Leno, to the Senate floor.

The bill is expected to be taken up this week by the full Senate.

Last year, a fracking moratorium by Mitchell failed on the Assembly floor, while another bill to regulate the practice, S.B. 4, became law and is currently being implemented (EnergyWire, May 31, 2013). Many environmentalists said S.B. 4 didn't go far enough to require compliance with existing environmental protections (EnergyWire, Sept. 12, 2013).

Last week's news that the Energy Information Administration had slashed its estimate of the recoverable oil in the massive Monterey Shale rock formation by 96 percent didn't dim environmentalists' support for the bill this time around (EnergyWire, May 22).

Sierra Club California released a poll last week showing that 68 percent of voters "strongly" or "somewhat" support the bill. The poll of 807 California residents was taken May 13-15.

"This vote for a fracking moratorium shows that lawmakers are seeing through the oil industry's smoke and mirrors," said Brian Nowicki of the Center for Biological Diversity. "California voters are increasingly concerned about the risks of fracking pollution, and phones are ringing off the hook in the Capitol. Our Legislature is realizing that fracking offers far more pain than gain."

An advocacy group devoted to keeping energy prices low said that a moratorium would cut jobs and increase reliance on imported fuels.

"While the science says fracking is safe, Hollywood celebrities and activists associated with the green movement are spreading misinformation to create fear and hysteria over safe and proven technology," the Coalition of Energy Users said in a release.

