# **Record crowd shows up at Kern County supervisors meeting in support of oil industry**

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**Body**

Jan. 15-- Jan. 15--If the ***Kern*** County ***oil*** industry wanted to send a message, it did.

At the invitation of the ***Kern*** County Board of Supervisors, more than a thousand ***oil*** workers, executives and individuals associated with the industry packed the ***Kern*** County Administrative Center on Tuesday, filling the building completely.

Two overflow rooms and chairs set up in front of a television in the lobby were not enough to hold the crowd. At one point near the meeting's beginning, fire officials stopped admitting people into the building, saying it had reached capacity.

An estimated 850 people watched the meeting inside the building, with around 250 relegated to listening to the proceedings on speakers that were set up just outside the entrance.

The 1,100-person turnout was said to be "certainly a record" by ***Kern*** County spokeswoman Megan Person.

Carrying picket signs, wearing hats that read "Make ***Oil*** Great Again," and plastered with stickers saying "I am the ***oil*** industry," attendees hoped to make it abundantly clear to not only the supervisors, but also the state officials in attendance, that meddling with ***oil*** production could have serious consequences.

"This is wonderful for us to come together," said Kathy Orrin, executive director of the Taft District Chamber of Commerce, who attended in support of the ***oil*** industry. "We're busy working so we don't think about how important this industry is, but it's important that we look at each other and say 'oh yeah, look at all these people who support our county.'"

On hand to observe the proceedings and provide insight into the state's plan for the ***oil*** industry were some of California's top regulators. Department of Conservation Director David Shabazian, ***Oil*** and Gas Supervisor Uduak-Joe Ntuk and the governor's legislative secretary Anthony Williams all spoke publicly in the county for the first time since the state announced new restrictions last year.

The new rules sent a wave of concern throughout the industry, with many worrying that the so-called managed decline of the state's ***oil*** production had already begun.

"With (Gov.) Gavin Newsom trying to do everything he can to shut down the ***oil*** industry, he's shutting down a lot of jobs at the same time," said James Leal, owner of PROS Incorporated, an oilfield service company.

A large contingent of Leal's employees attended the meeting to advocate for their jobs, Leal said. He hoped the large turnout would help persuade state regulators to allow ***Kern*** County's ***oil*** work to continue.

Rowdy Dickard, a general manager for a spill response and tank cleanup company, agreed with Leal in the hope that regulators would take note of the turnout.

"They are going to drive so many people out of California it's not even going to be funny. It's going to ruin this state," he said of the state's plan for ***oil***'s decline. "We need to send them the message that 'hey, we're here. And we're not going anywhere.'"

The large crowd was almost entirely in favor of the industry. While environmental groups held a press conference about an hour and a half before the 2 p.m. start time, almost no activists showed up to the meeting.

However, local petitioners gathering signatures to recall the governor attended, saying they hoped to gain hundreds of signatures through the attendance.

"Anywhere there's ***oil***, we campaign," said volunteer John Manning.

The marathon meeting lasted well into Tuesday night, with many attendees sticking it out to speak during public comments.

One man who noted he would watch from outside the building said he hoped the governor would take note.

"When the governor is talking about reducing emissions, he's really not thinking globally at all," said retired environmental engineering manager Jon Carrithers, claiming Newsom had not considered the environmental impacts of shipping ***oil*** overseas. "It's really a bad policy for the environment and I just think that needs to be brought forward."

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