# **With triumphs in rearview mirror, Kern County positions itself as defender of oil at State of the County dinner**

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Jan. 30-- Jan. 30--At a time when ***Kern*** County's two economic powerhouses, ***oil*** and agriculture, are threatened by state cutbacks, local leaders spent much of the 22nd State of the County Dinner reveling in the county's recent successes.

"This has been a banner year," said Richard Chapman, CEO of the ***Kern*** Economic Development Corp., which hosted the dinner. "This is the future of California."

Referencing the approaching opening of Amazon's fulfillment center, and the first Lightning in a Bottle festival held in ***Kern*** County, along with the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino planned near Mettler, some see the county as being in one of its best positions ever to face the future.

"We're kind of getting things done around here," said ***Kern*** County spokeswoman Megan Person.

Yet, the topic of ***oil*** inevitably came up. The State of the County came mere weeks after Gov. Gavin Newsom sent representatives to a Board of Supervisors meeting to hear the concerns of local ***oil*** producers over new state regulations.

More than a thousand people showed up to be seen, and many voiced their frustration that the state appeared to be pulling back from ***oil*** with no plan to replace the jobs that would be lost if the industry left California.

Supervisor Leticia Perez, who gave Wednesday's keynote address, took the opportunity to align herself completely on the side of the ***oil*** industry.

In her speech, she spoke of the industry's ability to lift families out of poverty, and feed many people who are looking to be self-reliant. She acknowledged the precarious nature the industry faced in the state, perhaps for the first time.

"We have inherited one of the most difficult periods in our county's history," she said. "The question of ***oil***'s future in ***Kern*** is certainly the most pressing."

Although some outside the county's borders may criticize the county for its ***oil*** industry, with Perez in full support of the industry, all five supervisors appear to be in a position to offer a full-throated fight to protect one of the defining aspects of ***Kern*** County.

Whether the county will be able to defend the ***oil*** industry in Sacramento has yet to be determined. This time next year, the State of the County dinner might offer a very different view of the future.

You can reach him at 661-395-7415. You may also follow him on Twitter @smorgenTBC.

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