

California governor seeks permanent ban on offshore drilling

14 December 2016, by Elliot Spagat



California Gov. Jerry Brown speaks at a news conference to launch a new organization aimed at protecting the oceans, called the International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification, at the Hotel del Coronado Tuesday, Dec. 13, 2016, in Coronado, Calif. Brown announced Tuesday a proposal to permanently ban new offshore oil and gas drilling in the state. (AP Photo/Gregory Bull)

California Gov. Jerry Brown on Tuesday asked President Barack Obama to permanently ban new offshore oil and gas drilling in the state before he leaves office.

If Obama agrees, the edict would set up a potential showdown with the incoming administration of Donald Trump. Brown said he didn't know if Trump would have the authority to overturn a permanent prohibition.

"California is blessed with hundreds of miles of spectacular coastline, home to scenic state parks, beautiful beaches, abundant wildlife and thriving communities," Brown wrote to Obama. "Clearly, large new oil and gas reserves would be inconsistent with our overriding imperative to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and combat the

devastating impacts of climate change."

Working to lock in environmental protections as the clock runs out on his presidency, Obama last month released a plan that bans any new oil drilling off the coasts of California, Oregon or Washington state until 2022.

The White House declined to comment on Brown's request to make the ban permanent.

Brown said he would invite fellow Democratic governors of Oregon and Washington to join the effort, which he announced at an event to launch a new organization to protect oceans. Those states also joined the International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification, which includes the governments of France, Chile, the Canadian provinces of British Columbia and Quebec, businesses and advocacy groups.

Many Democrats in California's congressional delegation, including Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, have urged Obama to use executive authority to permanently block oil and gas leasing on the West Coast. In 2014, Brown asked for a ban on Pacific offshore drilling through 2022, but climate activists have pushed him to ask for a permanent ban.

Skyli McAfee, national oceans director for the environmental advocacy group The Nature Conservancy, said she was "extremely pleased at how seriously (Brown) is taking the issue and his reliance on the academic community."

An oil industry group, the Western States Petroleum Association, called Brown's effort unrealistic, and said it ignores the state's energy needs.



Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper, a Democrat, said he didn't expect significant changes under Trump toward states like his that have legalized recreational use of marijuana.

Hickenlooper said Democrats may find themselves in the unusual position of advocating for states' rights in a Trump administration, a stance more commonly associated with Republicans.

Idaho Gov. Butch Otter, a Republican, wrapped his arm around Hickenlooper and said, "Welcome to the party."

California Gov. Jerry Brown, center, arrives for a news conference ahead of Canadian Ambassador David MacNaughton, behind, during the Western Governors Association winter meeting at the Hotel del Coronado Tuesday, Dec. 13, 2016, in Coronado, Calif. Brown announced Tuesday a proposal to permanently ban new offshore oil and gas drilling in the state, during an event to launch a new organization aimed at protecting oceans, called the International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification. (AP Photo/Gregory Bull)

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"If offshore production is banned it will force us to import more oil from foreign sources," the association said in a statement. "That oil is produced under less stringent environmental regulations, and its transportation to California will create an increase in greenhouse gases and other pollutants."

The group added that [offshore drilling](#) has been done safely and responsibly for decades.

Brown later joined the Western Governors Association's winter meeting, where he warned against expectations of major policy changes happening quickly under Trump. He said Congress and the judiciary serve as checks on the president and that differences tend to narrow over time.

"If the world ends, we're in deep trouble, but that hasn't happened yet," Brown said at a news conference, responding to a question about the consequences of overturning the Affordable Care Act.

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