

Midterm voters pass four, defeat four ballot measures to ban hydraulic fracturing November 5, 2014

During midterm elections, ballots in several states included measures to ban hydraulic fracturing and other unconventional drilling techniques. Voters approved four bans and rejected four bans which would limit industry use of hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, a well-stimulation technology in which pressurized liquids—typically chemicals or sand suspended in water—are injected into a wellbore to open rock pores and release natural gas or petroleum.

Two counties in California passed initiatives to ban hydraulic fracturing and other unconventional oil drilling: 67 percent of Mendocino County residents voted in favor of an anti-fracking measure, and San Benito County voters blocked “high-intensity petroleum operations,” including acid well stimulation treatments and cyclic steam injection by 59 percent. A similar measure, which would have blocked high-intensity petroleum operations, was defeated with 62 percent of the vote in Santa Barbara County. Voters in Athens, Ohio limited fracking operations indirectly by approving a “Community Bill of Rights,” a declaration of residents’ rights to clean air and water. Similar charter amendments granting rights to clean air and water were struck down in three other Ohio communities in Gates Mills, Kent, and Youngstown.

In Denton, Texas, voters approved an anti-fracking ordinance set to take effect on December 2, 2014. The ban has the potential to set an important precedent in the biggest energy-producing state and prompt legal battles with the oil and gas industry. Two separate lawsuits have been filed following the vote in district courts to challenge the ban.

Sources: E&E News, Time

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