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AB 2145 Attack On Local Energy Choice Defeated by Consumer & Clean Energy Advocates

In an extraordinary legislative upset, David beat Goliath in Sacramento when Senator Darrell Steinberg brought down the gavel this morning at 3:00 a.m. to close the 2013-14 legislative session, with no vote on Assembly Bill 2145. AB 2145, the proposed law aimed at crushing locally based clean energy efforts known as Community Choice energy programs in California, is officially dead.

The newly emerged statewide coalition, Californians for Energy Choice, pushed back the monopoly electrical utilities' latest attempt to deeply undermine competition from these emerging local programs. Previously, Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) spent over \$46 million in 2010 pushing Proposition 16, a ballot measure that would have ended Community Choice in California. Voters soundly defeated the measure. Organizers who fought against Prop 16, joined with scores of new activists to help form the new coalition.

"The monopoly utilities made a huge mistake when they forced us to create a coordinated statewide coalition to fight AB 2145. We have now educated thousands of people and legislators to the fact that Community Choice is the state's most powerful tool to give communities local control over electricity supply, and rapidly build clean energy programs that will put Californians back to work, and combat the climate crisis. We can now use this new coalition to change the game on energy in California," said Sunnyvale resident Margaret Okuzumi, a key member of Californians for Energy Choice.

The defeat of AB 2145 protects the ability of local communities to take control of decision-making about their electricity sources. It also empowers them to access lower rates by leveraging the joint customer buying power and energy market competition that Community Choice makes possible. The door is once again wide open for Community Choice to flourish in California. Local governments throughout the State now have a green light to create successful clean energy-based Community Choice programs.

"The People of California have once again seen through Big Utility's excessive antics and defeated AB 2145 to free ourselves from the grip of the monopolies and their accomplices," said Bruce Wolfe of the Haight Ashbury Neighborhood Council and SF Clean Energy Advocates. "It is now time for all of their corporate resistance to stop, to allow emerging Community Choice programs like San Francisco's CleanPowerSF to be implemented immediately."

Erica Etelson, a San Francisco East Bay activist stated, "I hope PG&E and the other utilities finally get the message that Californians want clean, affordable, 21st century electricity and won't stand for monopoly bullying in Sacramento."

"This is ultimately about energy democracy," said Al Weinrub, coordinator for the Oakland-based Local Clean Energy Alliance. "The question is, will the power to decide what kinds of energy we use and who benefits from the system, be in the hands of a small group of powerful players, as it has been for the past hundred years, or will the power be in the hands of the people?"

Californians for Energy Choice thanks the Senate President Pro Tem Darryl Steinberg, Minority Leader Bob Huff, and the entire Senate and all of its hard-working aides, who saw through the misinformation put out by 2145 operatives and helped to defeat the bill.

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