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County of Orange opposes SCAQMD ban on gas furnaces, water heaters

SANTA ANA, Calif. The Orange County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution to oppose enactment of a state approved rule prohibiting installation of natural gas furnaces and water heaters in new buildings, which will drive up costs of rent and home purchases by more than \$20 billion.

Supervisor Janet Nguyen authored the resolution. She sits on the Southern California Air Quality Management District's (SCAQMD) Board of Directors, which will decide whether to pass a recommendation by staff curtailing gas heaters. Supervisor Don Wagner previously served on the SCAQMD Board when the rules were proposed and galvanized community support against them.

Even as the proposed rules have been scaled back due to public outcry, the latest amended versions still fail to address concerns over their cost, affordability for homeowners, and disincentives to homebuilding.

Rules 1111 and 1121 would impose new, legally binding regulations on all 17 million people in the Southern California region. The rules would take effect Jan. 1, 2027, and phase out replacements in existing buildings on Jan. 1, 2029. Compliance would require apartment owners, homeowners, and businesses to pay for expensive all-electric furnaces and water heaters, their associated panel upgrades, new plumbing, and physical renovations to accommodate these new units.

"I'm concerned that residents won't be allowed to make decisions on their own energy sources. Just like the push for electric cars, we don't have the electrical infrastructure to support this new regulation," Supervisor Janet Nguyen said. "We need to balance protection of our environment with costs of living and loss of jobs in the heating sector."

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Supervisor Don Wagner represented Orange County on SCAQMD's Board until February. Both supervisors have worked together against the devastating impacts that these rules would have if implemented.

"In my brief time on the SCAQMD governing Board, I was appalled to learn of these atrocious rules. They would devastate homeowners, small businesses, apartment owners and tenants across Orange County. They would add exorbitant cost – ultimately to almost every residential building, " said Supervisor Wagner. "These costs would carry over onto renters, who are already struggling with the high cost of living in Southern California. They would significantly challenge our electrical grid and make homebuilding – already difficult in Southern California – much more expensive. The air quality improvement from these costly changes would only amount to a marginal 2% reduction in NOx emissions and does not justify the untold financial harm that will be wrought upon untold millions of Southern Californian residents due to these thoughtless, politically charged rules."

The Orange County Board of Supervisors is joined in opposition to these rules by Assemblymembers Diane Dixon and Laurie Davies, California Senior Alliance, Orange County Council of Governments, Association of California Cities-Orange County, Orange County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Orange County Business Council, the cities of Anaheim, Brea, Dana Point, Fountain Valley, Fullerton, Garden Grove, Huntington Beach, Lake Forest, Los Alamitos, Santa Ana, San Clemente, Villa Park, Yorba Linda, numerous other cities and community groups across the region, as well as thousands of individuals who have contacted SCAQMD and said NO to proposed Rules 1111 and 1121.

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Supervisor Janet Nguyen represents the First District of Orange County Board of Supervisors, which is the cities of Cypress, Fountain Valley, Garden Grove, Huntington Beach, La Palma, Los Alamitos, Seal Beach, Westminster and the unincorporated areas of Midway City and Rossmoor. Supervisor Nguyen served in the California State Senate, California State Assembly and as Orange County Supervisor and Garden Grove City Councilmember.

To learn more about the Third District office, please visit donwagnerca.com and follow him on social media @donwagnerca for the latest updates.