

Lobbyists pile on greenhouse-gas reduction bill

Jim Miller, Sacramento Bee, 8-29-15

Perhaps no end-of-session fight is as fierce as that over Senate Bill 350, the legislation by Senate President Pro Tem Kevin de León and backed by Gov. Jerry Brown meant to slash motor vehicle fuel consumption, double buildings' energy efficiency and increase the use of renewable electricity.

The climate change measure faces uncertain prospects as lawmakers hurry to finish their work for the legislative year. Yet government filings make one thing clear: the range of interests engaged in the SB 350 debate is broad and deep-pocketed.

From oil producers and solar companies to farm groups, manufacturers and public agencies, more than 200 lobbyist employers reported working on the bill in quarterly filings with the state from January through June, shortly before lawmakers left for their summer recess. They returned Aug. 17.

All told, those interests reported almost \$14 million in direct lobbying expenses on SB 350 or other state matters in the first six months of the year. They also listed \$10.5 million in other payments to influence, an amount that includes other public advocacy efforts by opponents and supporters of the bill through June. Both sides launched advertising campaigns in recent weeks.

The Western States Petroleum Association, California Chamber of Commerce, Chevron Corp. and NextGen Climate Action, the group led by billionaire environmentalist Tom Steyer, an ardent supporter of the bill, ranked atop the list of lobbyist employers that reported working on SB 350.

Besides the payments to influence, many of the interests involved in the debate over SB 350 have donated generously to current members of the Legislature.

Lawmakers reported at least \$5 million in donations from SB 350-engaged lobbyist employers that have a campaign committee, according to contribution records from January 2013 through June. The State Building and Construction Trades Council, the California New Car Dealers Association, the California State Pipe Trades Council and the California Building Industry Association lead that list.