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## **Fractured Democracy: A Case Study on How Passionate Public Advocacy Helped Pass the Controversial 2016 Measure Z in Monterey County, California**

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**Fractured Democracy:**

A Case Study on How Passionate Public Advocacy

Helped Pass the Controversial 2016 Measure Z

in Monterey County, California

Submitted by

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**for**

EMPA 396 Graduate Research Project in Public Management

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## **Abstract**

In 2016, the Monterey County (California) Board of Supervisors voted 3-2 not to place a moratorium on ‘fracking’ -- a controversial extraction method used by the oil and gas industry. A small, but passionate group of environmental advocates named Protect Monterey County began an emotional grass roots, environmental-focused, campaign to overturn that decision by ballot measure. “Measure Z” was touted a ban on fracking, but also contained less publicized language to restrict oil and gas production, among other items. Amid much controversy over the veracity of claims by opponents and proponents, Measure Z passed, but did the “voice of the public” really know what they were voting for? This case study and review of the relevant literature will examine the approach and methods of a small organization to appeal to voters, the merits of the ballot measure as a democratic process, the disputed approach by the County Board of Supervisors to address an important and charged issue by allowing it to become a hot-button partisan matter, and the ever-growing costs being realized to rule on the legality of the Measure. Data will be collected from County, city, and state public records and meeting minutes; surveys and interviews of local citizenry; focus groups; and, first-person interviews with key informants both directly involved with Measure Z and knowledgeable about the politics and maneuvering by both sides of the ballot initiative. The results of this study may provide information on how public administrators can better work with advocacy groups and more efficiently balance significant and emotionally-sensitive environmental concerns in a non-partisan manner.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### *Background of the Problem.*

In November of 2016, via the passage of a ballot initiative named “Measure Z,” Monterey became the seventh California county to ban “fracking” by the oil and gas industry, joining nearby San Benito and Santa Cruz counties, and was the first major oil-producing county to do so. ( Monterey County/Ballotpedia, 2016 ) Measure Z was put on the ballot by a grassroots group named Protect Monterey County, who had environmental-based concerns that fracking can lead to contamination of groundwater and impact existing water supplies, create geophysical disturbances, and that oil and gas industry infrastructure can have a disastrous impact to natural habitats and the Monterey County environment. Protect Monterey County leadership aggressively moved forward with a focused, pro-environment campaign to put Measure Z on the ballot when County Supervisors ignored a unanimous recommendation by the planning commission for a moratorium on fracking (Protect Monterey County, as per website; <http://protectmontereycounty.org/faqs/>, 2016 ).

By popular definition, the term “fracking” is shorthand for hydraulic fracturing, a type of drilling that involves tapping tight-rock formations like shale by drilling vertically, then horizontally, to pump a mixture of water, sand, and additives at high pressure to create micro-fractures in the rock. This method allows for the extraction of gas and oil deposited that is otherwise not accessible by any other methods. In 2016, the growing controversy over fracking from both economic and environmental perspectives was very newsworthy. Public trust in the oil and gas industry and the process of fracking began to quickly erode earlier this decade after the 2010 offshore *Deepwater Horizon* disaster launched investigations into the onshore version of shale gas extraction, the anti-fracking documentary film *Gasland*, severe water quality issues in Flint Michigan, were among the events that highlighted dangers to the environment (Mazur,

2016), and numerous studies from credible sources such as Stanford University seemed to give credence for fracking to be the possible cause for toxic chemicals in underground drinking water and an unusual amount of unique seismic activity in the vicinity of widespread fracking operations. (Jackson, R.B., et al, 2014)

As its most touted and publicized objective, Measure Z sought to ban fracking, but the advocacy campaign minimized to the public additional intents of the Measure, such as: stop the expansion of oil drilling throughout the county and restrict the injection of wastewater into the ground. This measure, then, also had a potential negative impact to the existing rights of private landowners and revenue that funds a wide range of critical public and educational services.

Opponents to Measure Z emphasized that the fracking method has never been used in Monterey County, cited the 60 years of safe oil and gas production in the County, and bemoaned the loss of jobs and industry tax payments of millions of dollars to benefit County schools and landowners should the Measure pass. There also were claims that Protect Monterey County waged an untruthful campaign by leveraging a media hot topic -- negative environmental impact by the insensitive and “money hungry” oil and gas industry -- thereby appealing to voters’ emotion to promote a ballot initiative. (Monterey Herald, 2016)

In the larger picture, however, is the ballot measure initiative process by enthusiastic and determined special interest groups a positive democratic process that enacts direct legislation representing the sensibilities of the people; or, is this process an emotional exercise hijacks the efforts of Public Administrators and elected officials to do the will of the people? What is the impact to the Public Administrator and the community served who depends on well-thought out and vetted policy to oversee their lives? This form of direct democracy is often immune to criticisms and can create a series of unintended effects that can offset the direct welfare gain

from initiatives.

*Statement of the Problem.*

A small special interest group created notable impact to Monterey County public administration policy by introducing a ballot measure in hydraulic fracturing (or, fracking) that passed; but, resulted in controversy, lawsuits, and a cost of significant time and money to taxpayers and public officials. How could these issues have been avoided for the community and still achieved the same results for this special interest group? As a method of direct democracy, the ballot measure can be an effective voice of the people to create policy and enact legislation. However, the inattention to local ballot measures and failure to collaborate with both sides of the debate by non-elected public administrators and elected officials resulted in a series of unintended consequences that might have been avoided. This study describes, examines and analyzes Monterey County's 2016 Measure Z to evaluate how unintended consequences are created and could be avoided.

*Purpose of the Study.*

The passage of Measure Z was a highly topical and emotionally-charged issue based on passionate concern for the environment but whose implementation via the ballot initiative process overlooked significant considerations related to the long-term impact of restricting oil and gas production in the County. This research will contribute to the public domain of information about the impact of ballot measures as a form of direct democracy; the impact of the ballot measure process to the public administration process; the impact to the stakeholders such as the County, farmers, families, land owners, oil and gas companies, oil and gas investors, the agricultural industry, various environmental groups, and the County's economic philosophy

regarding the creation of jobs; and less so, the impact of both oil and gas production to the environment. This study investigates the environmental, economic, political, and public perception considerations for Monterey County public administrators, to include an analysis and evaluation of how the lead-up to this Measure might have been better handled, as well as how to deal with growing complications from Measure Z's execution.

*Significance of the Study.*

This study adds to the knowledge of the problem by examining not only the ballot measure process and rationale behind pushing such an initiative based on a highly-charged and emotional aspect of the problem (oil and gas operations in Monterey County), but also the unintended consequences from the banning of long-existing oil and gas production and taking away long-standing funding streams for important County programs. Bringing impartial analysis and conclusions to the issue would benefit both environmental groups and proponents of the oil and gas industries.

*Assumptions.*

The phenomenon and impact of special interest groups can have reckless results if elements of the campaign are not transparent and responsible. Successful ballot measures can have a spate of negative consequences to the citizenry to which it purports to benefit. In the case of Measure Z, if Monterey County officials and administrators had been diligent in managing the public interest behind this initiative, Monterey County voters may have voted differently on the measure. There are many angles and perspectives to this phenomenon of ballot measure initiatives, which invites not just a single hypothesis, but a series of assumptions.

Rather than propose an *a priori* hypothesis, a more practical approach is to develop a



short list of assumptions to forward the research of the paper. Therefore, the author makes the following assumptions to direct the research of this paper (A = Assumption):

A1. Ballot measures are a double-edged sword. Initiatives introduced by environmental special interest groups are a virtuous and democratic option that gives voice to public concerns, but do harm by disrupting the policymaking process and the public good.

A2. Politics is the most important factor in ballot measure success. Although environment-related initiatives strike a passionate response in Monterey County, political affiliation is the preeminent factor among voters in determining support for environmental ballot initiatives.

A3. Ballot measures result when elected officials do not do their job. Elected officials & administrators can do a better job in providing for the public interest by more astute & effective managing of special interest groups.

#### *Main Research Question.*

The main research question examined in this study was: how did the small advocacy group Protect Monterey County frame and then gain control of a ballot measure that had widespread impact on County resources and philosophy? Successful ballot measures can have multiple factors contributing to success (or failure). There are hidden agendas, there are negative consequences, and there is the beauty of giving the people an alternative opportunity to be heard. And in the case of Measure Z, if Monterey County officials and administrators had been diligent in managing the public interest behind this initiative, Monterey County voters may have voted differently on the Measure.

#### *Research Sub Questions.*

The following research sub-questions were examined in this study:

1. How did the ballot measure initiative Measure Z originate?
2. What were the tactics of environmental special interest group Protect Monterey County (PMC) in campaigning for support of Measure Z?
3. What could County administrators have done to foresee the potential disputes and costs that would result from the Measure's passage?
4. Is the impact to the County from Measure Z -- losses to stakeholders such as farmers, families, land owners, oil and gas companies, oil and gas investors, the agricultural industry, various environmental groups--be directly attributable to the tactics of the PMC?

The phenomenon of the ballot measure process lends itself to many factors. These questions were fashioned to represent the main areas of inquiry for the research model and to ensure the results and findings are focused on these 4 core principles at the crux of the study.

*Limitations.*

- a. Oil and gas industry specifics. Although incredibly important to the decision-making process of the voters and officials and the understanding of Measure Z, this paper will not conduct in-depth business/economic analysis of the petrochemical industry in Monterey County (or the US), nor the details of the all-important fracking and water treatment processes that are so germane to the language restricting such processes contained in Measure Z.
- b. South County data representation. The research model was unable to contact and capture the desired demographic and opinions from the south part of Monterey County. The oil and gas

production (and, hence, jobs) in Monterey County occurs only in the southern area around King City. The population there is most affected by the restrictions and implications of Measure Z; therefore, the perspective from elected officials and citizens would likely be different than those perspectives the rest of the county.

*Definition of Terms.*

Fracking. This term is used liberally throughout the world, and is shorthand for hydraulic fracturing, a type of drilling that involves tapping tight-rock formations like shale by drilling vertically, then horizontally, to pump a mixture of water, sand, and additives at high pressure to create micro-fractures in the rock. This method allows for the extraction of gas and oil deposited that is otherwise not accessible by any other methods. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2017)

Protect Monterey County (PMC). The mission of this organization is to address the implications of Measure Z. PMC was started in 2015 as a grassroots group that collected 16,000 signatures to put Measure Z on the ballot. Thus far, they are not involved in other environmental issues. After helping to pass Measure Z, PMC now works to ensure that the voters' decision is honored. PMC has assembled a strong legal team to intervene in the lawsuits and assist the County with Measure Z legal defense. PMC will also work with the County to ensure that Measure Z is fully implemented. (Protect Monterey County website; <http://protectmontereycounty.org/faqs/>)

Measure Z. An initiative placed on the ballot, and approved, for [Monterey County](#) voters in [Monterey County, California](#), on [November 8, 2016](#). This initiative was designed by [Protect Monterey County](#) to prohibit the use of fracking, as well as other high-intensity methods of oil and gas extraction. The language of the measure is focused on a ban on new oil and gas operations. A Yes vote supports a ban on the practice of fracking, as well as banning new oil

and gas operations in the county and phasing out operational oil and gas wells. A No vote is “a vote against banning the use of fracking or other high-intensity methods of oil and gas extraction. This would leave restrictions on the oil and gas industry largely to the [state government](#).”

(Ballotpedia;

[https://ballotpedia.org/Monterey County, California, Ban on Oil and Gas Drilling, Measure Z \(November 2016\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Monterey_County,_California,_Ban_on_Oil_and_Gas_Drilling,_Measure_Z_(November_2016))

#### *Expected Impact of the Research.*

Research into this topic could provide insight in a larger sense (beyond Monterey County) on how emotion-based advocacy campaigns from special interest groups can appeal to voters and achieve a success that overlooks ultimate consequences. The paper will also examine how local public administrators and elected officials might better anticipate and collaborate with special interest groups to arrive at more cost- and resource-effective solutions to policy issues. Research is expected to demonstrate the government’s need to provide responsible stewardship on politically divisive issues and act to protect and conserve the environment in which we live -- but also be responsible to the livelihoods and financial well-being of human beings in the jurisdiction they administer. This research is important to the field of public administration scholarship because it will address how advocacy groups influence an election, or a vote. This paper will also lend some insight into potentially effective strategies for successful ballot initiatives. And, what is the impact of location on such initiatives -- does this approach work better in Monterey County and California?

## Chapter 2: Review of Literature

### *Introduction.*

In order to serve their constituents, Public Administrators need to function with maximum efficiency in formulating and implementing public policy. By utilizing the ballot measure initiative process, special interest groups can create policy outside the normal public administration policymaking process. The use of ballot measure initiatives can be viewed as an exercise of our democracy and alternative opportunity for the will of the people to be expressed; but, can also be viewed as a disruption to the standard policymaking process within a jurisdiction that can have negative consequences to the constituency to be served.

In 2015-16, an environmental group named Protect Monterey County successfully campaigned to get an initiative called Measure Z on the ballot and, subsequently, passed by 56% majority. Measure Z impacted the County's oil and gas industry by banning 'fracking' in Monterey County, and by restricting oil and gas development and extraction processes. Since its adoption, numerous legal battles have ensued to attempt to overturn the measure and have resulted in had enormous drain on the County

Measure Z will be used as a mixed-method "Explanatory" case study (employing both qualitative and quantitative inquiry of key informants and the voting public) to examine this 'fractured democracy' process and how the voice of the people can result in needed policy action but have unintended and costly consequences. This study investigates the environmental, economic, political, and public perception considerations for Monterey County public administrators, to include an analysis and evaluation of how the lead-up to this Measure might have been better handled, as well as how to deal with growing complications from Measure Z's execution.

The scope of literature reviewed will encompass the history of ballot initiatives in California; special interest groups and environmental ballot initiative successes in California; and, crucial elements of successful ballot measures related to environmental causes. Additionally, literature related to the origin and factors behind the Measure Z campaign will be examined, as well as impact of special interest groups and ballot measures on ability of elected officials and public administrators to govern efficiently and effectively.

Intentional exclusions in this literature review are related to specifics of oil and gas operations in Monterey County. Despite being the focus of the Measure Z ballot initiative, and despite the multi-layered ramifications of limiting oil and gas production in the County, this research will only lightly touch upon oil and gas industry operations and not do a ‘deep dive’ into the technical aspects of fracking, oil and gas extraction processes, and wastewater issues.

Although there is a wealth of local newspaper and media coverage of the Measure Z issue from 2016-current, there is not a great availability of considered scholarly sources on the specific Monterey issue. Nonetheless, in the general perspective there appears to be sufficient material on the bigger picture of ballot initiatives and their impact on both the voting population and how politicians respond to initiatives that serve as a forcing function for action. Following is an overview of significant literature published on this topic. These pieces were considered based on the author(s) credentials, the level of objectivity, those most convincing of their opinions, the most value, and made the greatest contribution to the understanding of the problem.

#### *Scholarly Literature Review.*

a. The growing importance of citizen initiatives was highlighted in a recent article entitled, “The Hidden Cost of Direct Democracy: How Ballot Initiatives Affect Politicians’

Selection and Incentives,” by Carlos Prato (PhD Economics, Georgetown and Northwestern Universities) and Bruno Strulovici (Economic theorist, Northwestern University). This article is critically pertinent in support of the assessments of this paper because it examines the impact “initiatives, referendums, and petitions” have not only on the direct democracy process, but also on “...the behavior and selection of elected officials.” (Prato, 2017) This examination is at the heart of the premise that Measure Z energized the voting populace but also reduced the accountability of politicians to the results and ramifications. Interesting, this article also provides thought for further study on the idea that initiatives are a disincentive to responsible action on the part of elected officials. The source -- *The Journal of Theoretical Politics* -- is entirely credible as an international peer-reviewed journal, whose focus is on the study and theory of political processes.

b. Another excellent source addresses a similar theme, albeit with a focus on bond monies to fund public projects. The Public Works Management and Policy journal article “When Voters Make Laws: How Direct Democracy Is Shaping American Cities,” by Elizabeth Garrett (University of Southern California, Los Angeles) and Mathew McCubbins (University of California, San Diego) directly researches three main assumptions that are also used in this paper: 1) Poorly thought-out choices are offered voters by elected officials; 2) Successful ballot initiatives usually result in watered-down language to appeal to a wider spectrum of voters, but can negate the very impact sought to achieve; and 3) Voters don’t always receive or have access to all the necessary information regarding impact and ramifications. (Garrett, 2008) In sum, the bottom line assesses that “voting cues” for voters are not always trustworthy; therefore, outcomes via initiatives do not always result in what the proponents intended.

c. The role of special interest groups in bringing ballot measures to the fore is a key

factor examined in this paper. Elisabeth Gerber's (Professor and researcher, Ford School of Public Policy) book, "The Populist Paradox: Interest Group Influence and the Promise of Direct Legislation." Although the material is somewhat dated (published in 1999), Gerber's premise holds that well-backed citizen interest groups -- no matter their size, as long as they have strong financial backing -- have power enough to be effective in using the ballot initiative to introduce legislation and alter the status quo. A critical conclusion reached by Gerber was eventually played out in the Measure Z saga, in that even with an expensive, high-profile campaign such as that implemented by the oil companies operating in Monterey County, if citizens do not like a proposed new law, such a campaign will not make them change their mind. The author's research and book are highly credible even in more modern day society and political landscapes, and likewise remain fundamental to our understanding of the role of citizen voters, organized interests, and elected officials.

d. It was paramount, in researching for this paper, to understand how the Measure Z 'fracking versus environment' narrative and conflict started, as well as to determine how opinion on this particular ballot struggle is impacted by media coverage. One question was, "Does media coverage lead to an increase in setting the fracking agenda in communities, counties, and/or states around the country?" Allan Mazur's article, "How did the fracking controversy emerge in the period 2010-2012?" addresses these issues and provides insight on the Monterey Measure Z controversy. Mr. Mazur's (expert in social dynamics and environmental issues, Syracuse University) examination of the rise in awareness of fracking includes a necessary background on the fracking process and economic benefit, as well as introduces his "Quantity of Coverage Theory" that explains the role of the news media in the rapid rise in media attention, public visibility, and, consequently (and quickly) public concern. He tracks the history of awareness of



the environmental dangers of fracking from the documentary *Gasland*; to its rise as a *cause célèbre* among Hollywood and TV stars (and those seeking notoriety); to the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill disaster; and, to its elevated status among the media, elected leaders, and legislators as a serious environmental problem demanding action. (Mazur, 2014)

e. In *The Journal of Federalism*, authors Gwen Arnold and Robert Holahan examine another vital piece of the basic assumptions of this paper. Their article, “The Federalism of Fracking: How the Locus of Policy-Making Authority Affects Civic Engagement,” was critical to this paper’s assumption of the significant impact of special interest groups on direct democracy-style legislation in smaller jurisdiction such as Monterey and Monterey County.: This paper sought to understand if the political structure of Monterey County engenders a less-resistant path to direct democracy and ballot initiative success. In other words, are initiatives and referendums easier and more likely to be introduced and passed than in other areas? In analyzing past studies and finding flaws in that methodology, the authors were able to determine that, “...where meaningful fracking policy-making authority rests with small local jurisdictions...” in jurisdictions such as New York State (as per the writer’s example) and Monterey, robust civic engagement is more meaningful and effective in shaping policy, [a](#) particularly in cases involving hydraulic fracturing. (Arnold, 2014)

Deleted: an

f. Unique analysis is needed from credible national-level sources, and will include data and conclusions from the National Bureau of Economic Research in a short report entitled, “Special Interest Groups and Economic Policy,” by Gene M. Grossman and Elhanan Helpman (researchers at Princeton and Harvard Universities, respectively). These authors focus not just on how policy is determined by special interest -- or, “pressure” -- groups to effect significant change, but also the ‘tools’ used by these pressure groups. This unique analysis will be key in

assessing the tools used by Measure Z interest groups and how they found a way to be effective in influencing the policy process and, ultimately, overturn existing County law.

#### *Additional Literature Review*

In support of this paper's sub-topics, a variety of on-line and hardcopy-accessible reviews and articles will be used to ensure the inclusion of background on fracking and the oil and gas industry, and facts about environmental impact of oil and gas production in Monterey County.

Topics covered in this additional research and background literature include:

- a. Effectiveness of past 'Anti-Fracking' initiatives by special interest/environmental group
- b. Unintended consequences to stakeholders in anti-fracking measures: proponents and opponents.
- c. Oil and gas industry operations in Monterey County.
- d. Economic impact of oil and gas industry in Monterey County--to include quantitative data on contribution to local taxes, jobs, and other economic considerations.
- e. Understanding Local Legalities of the regulation of Fracking.
- f. Can fracking bans succeed in oil and gas country without generating expensive lawsuits?
- g. Legal and ethical issues regarding how special interest/environmental issues are marketed to the public / get on the ballot.
- h. Support to anti-fracking groups from international sources who want to protect their stake in worldwide energy supply.
- i. Influence of local media groups in Monterey County.
- j. Influence of political parties in supporting Anti- and Pro- Measure Z positions.
- k. What are the true environmental costs and benefits of Fracking?

## 1. What is the impact on drinking water?

### *Conclusion.*

The literature review indicates that current day ballot measure initiatives have their roots in California's railroad baron-era past, and emerged due to a real and genuine concern that the voice of the middle- and lower-class citizen had very little voice in the democratic processes of the early 20th century. Yet, the leveraging of 'the common man' emotions on key issues (such as environmental-based causes) by special interest groups has resulted in unpredictable consequences that uproot public administrator efforts and require significant unprogrammed resources to resolve. A common theme is that small numbers of determined citizens with varying motives (and, frequently, from outside the jurisdiction of the initiative) can wield disproportionate and significant influence on policy. The literature clearly indicates ballot measure initiatives are a useful and democratic method to impact public policy, but the phenomenon and impact of special interest groups can have reckless results if elements of the campaign are not transparent and responsible. Successful ballot measures can have a spate of negative consequences to the citizenry to which it purports to benefit. The literature indicates in the case of Measure Z, if Monterey County officials and administrators had been diligent in managing the public interest behind this initiative, Monterey County voters may have voted differently on the measure.

### **Chapter 3: Research and Methodologies**

#### *Introduction.*

The purpose of the study is to examine how ballot measures introduced by environmental special interest groups impact the policymaking process of public administrators. The research approach of this paper is to do a case study on a specific ballot measure--the 2016 Monterey County ballot initiative Measure Z [to ban fracking (primarily) in Monterey County]--to highlight the inherent reasons for the emergence and successful passing of the initiative, and how the exercise of this democratic process can lead to unanticipated impacts to public administrators and elected officials.

More specifically, the research and data gathering method employed for this Case Study is considered a mixed-method, "Exploratory" design, which utilizes a 2-phase, sequential approach. The initial phase of data collection is the Qualitative phase, whereby structured (but open-ended) interviews are conducted with key informants (such as Supervisors, Mayors, Council, Business leaders, media, activists, community members) to gain an understanding of factors relating to the ballot measure process. (Leedy and Ormrod, 2016, p.313) During this phase, possible underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations were recorded.

The results of this first-phase effort were used as a basis to create and shape the Quantitative data collection Phase II, whereby surveys and focused questions were distributed to a wider audience in order to arrive at statistically-based conclusions. The resulting Phase II survey used was a 16-question design, with 3 different categories of questions to gather different kinds of data. The first 8 questions focused on collecting demographic data (age, gender, etc.), the next group of 2 questions were general questions about the environment, and the final 6 questions focused on the respondent's opinion on various aspects of voting on Measure Z. The

average time to take the survey was just under 5 minutes.

This approach, using the controversial Measure Z as a case study, will illuminate some of the reasons why ballot initiatives (writ large) introduced by environmental special interest groups operate outside the normal policymaking process. While a democratic expression of the people's desires, this approach to addressing public concerns can have unforeseen impact to the public good. The aforementioned mixed-method Exploratory research design for this case study will attempt to extract enough measurable data to assist public administrators by deriving conclusions and tangible solutions to address the need to more efficiently collaborate with special interest groups and the ballot measure process.

*Research question.*

The main research question examined in this study was: how did a small environmental advocacy group successfully frame and gain support of a controversial ballot measure that had widespread impact on Monterey County resources and policy? This question emerged after the successful passing of the 2016 Measure Z banned fracking and restricted oil and gas operations in Monterey County but was subsequently challenged by opposing citizens and interest groups, and after 18 months of legal battles and significant costs, was finally overturned in May of 2018 (save the fracking ban). In essence, the County--where no fracking actually occurs due to soil and geophysical limitations--was back to where it was in 2016, but it took substantial time, resources, and millions of dollars to arrive there. The research strives to discover the root factors in why and how special interest groups (especially those focused on environmental causes) successfully get ballot measures passed, even though the end result may be at odds with policymaking efforts of elected officials and public administrators, and the overall good of the

public.

*Sub-questions.*

- a. Why do we have a process to allow special interest groups to introduce ballot measures that can be directly voted on by the public?
- b. What are the key factors in the successful campaigning of environmental ballot measures?
- c. What could County administrators have done to foresee the potential disputes and costs that would result from Measure Z's passage?
- d. Is the impact to the County from Measure Z--losses to stakeholders such as farmers, families, land owners, oil and gas companies, oil and gas investors, the agricultural industry, various environmental groups--acceptable so as to ensure the citizenry might have an alternate vehicle to democratically voice their concerns via the ballot measure process?
- e. How can public administrators provide responsible stewardship on politically divisive issues and act to protect and conserve the environment in which we live -- but also be responsible to the livelihoods and financial well-being of human beings in the jurisdiction they administer?

*State the assumptions.*

Rather than propose an *a priori* hypothesis, this paper sought to gather information from qualitative research to see where the research might lead. Instead, the multi-faceted impact and phenomenon of ballot measure initiatives invites a series of assumptions. Therefore, the author has created a short list of assumptions to forward the research of the paper. Successful ballot measures can have a spate of negative consequences to the citizenry to which it purports to benefit. In the case of Measure Z, if Monterey County officials and administrators had been

diligent in managing the public interest behind this initiative, Monterey County voters may have voted differently on the Measure.

Assumptions to direct the research of this paper follow (A = Assumption):

A1. Ballot initiatives introduced by environmental special interest groups are a virtuous and democratic option that gives voice to public concerns, but do harm by disrupting the policymaking process and the public good.

A2. Although environment-related initiatives strike a passionate response in Monterey County, political affiliation is the preeminent factor among voters in determining support for environmental ballot initiatives.

A3. Elected officials & administrators can do a better job in providing for the public interest by more astute & effective managing of special interest groups.

#### *Methods for collecting data.*

The methodology for data collection is a multi-pronged effort. Data gathering will be accomplished via face-to-face or telephonic direct interviews, and email interviews, as well as a survey. For data collection, I'll be using:

- Face-to-face interviews using iPhone audio recording and manual note taking;
- Telephonic conversations and taking manual notes;
- Email questions to those unable to be scheduled for interviews; and
- Quantitative survey to be implemented to a variety of platforms by Survey Monkey.

First, a series of face-to-face interviews will be conducted with key informants to the Measure Z initiative. Questions for the interview will be consistent for each interviewee, but will contain enough leeway for open-ended discussion. The objective is to keep each interview to the approximate 30-minute timeframe. Conversations will be recorded via iPhone and notes

will be taken that highlight main points of interest and ensure they will not be passed over during transcription. Further, these same questions will be sent out over email to key informants that could not be scheduled for face-to-face direct interviews. Each informant sent an email will also receive a follow-up phone call to thank them for their submissions and insights, and to clarify any needed points.

*State the independent variable.*

What is the variable that causes, or results in, a successful ballot measure? Special interest groups with a complex agenda and a ballot initiative campaign to win, will promote the simple environmental aspect of a ballot initiative in order to leverage Monterey County's natural affinity to support environmental causes.

*State the dependent variable.*

There are interconnected dependent variables, related to how voters tend to vote. Voters who are registered Democrats or hold to Democratic party values will vote to support environmental-focused initiatives because the local Democratic Party is supporting the ballot measure. In parallel, registered Democratic voters, or voters who hold to Democratic party values, also tend to be supportive of the environment. Therefore, when a ballot measure such as Measure Z was put to a vote in 2016, the expectation was that political affiliation is the most significant and determining predictor of the ballot measure's success.

*Population sampling strategy.*

Participants asked to response to the study questions are a mix of elected and public officials who has had direct knowledge of the 2016 Measure Z ballot initiative. They should be considered subject matter experts of both processes and the major 'players' in the County



political arena. They were selected because of their experience at the State, County, City, and local jurisdictions, for their knowledge of the political and governmental policymaking processes, and for their active and willing civic participation in the jurisdictions where they live and serve. They are clearly the best resource for primary data collection relevant to this study. Following is a list of desired interview subjects:

a. Pro-Con sides of Measure Z:

- (1) Mary Hsia-Coron; Protect Monterey County (YES on Measure Z)
- (2) Maureen Wruck; Planning Consultant (NO on Measure Z)
- (3) Dr. Laura Solorio; President, Protect Monterey County

b. Monterey County Supervisors in office during the campaign and vote on Measure Z:

- (1) Dave Potter; former Supervisor, District 5.
- (2) John Phillips; Supervisor, District 2.
- (3) Jane Parker; Supervisor, District 3.

c. Key/influential citizens, to incl Mayors and Councilmembers

- (1) Mary Ann Leffel; President, Monterey County Business Council.
- (2) Ralph Rubio; Mayor of Seaside.
- (3) Mary Adams; former head of United Way, current County Supervisor.
- (4) Clyde Roberson; Mayor of Monterey.
- (5) Ed Smith; Councilman, city of Monterey.
- (6) Bruce Delgado; Mayor of Marina.
- (7) Nancy Amadeo; Councilwoman, city of Marina.
- (8) Jerry Edelin; Mayor of Del Rey Oaks.
- (9) Dino Pick; City Manager, Del Rey Oaks.

- (10) Dennis Donahue; former Mayor of Salinas.
- (11) Jimmy Panetta; Congressman, 20th District (Monterey County).
- (12) Bill Monning; CA Senate Majority Leader.
- (13) Mark Stone; Assemblyman Monterey County.
- (14) Doug Yount; developer and President, Monterey Peninsula Chamber of Commerce.
- (15) Steve Emerson; President, Marina Foundation.
- (16) Mike LeBarre; Mayor of King City.

d. Newspaper editors and writers:

- (1) Phil Molnar; former reporter for Monterey Herald newspaper.
- (2) Mary Duan; Monterey County Weekly and co-Founder, Voices of Monterey.
- (3) Royal Calkins; Voices of Monterey Bay and former Editor, Monterey Herald.

e. Leaders/Members of Monterey County Democratic/Republican parties:

- (1) Nan Lesnik; business woman, former leader in Monterey County Republican Party.
- (2) Alan Hoffa; Monterey County Democratic Central Committee.
- (3) Jeff Gorman; Monterey County Republican Party, District 5.

As the list indicates, this approach contains an adequate amount of key informants with the unique background and the specific experience needed to discuss the topic in-depth and to inform the study.

Participants asked to respond to the survey questions will be a random sampling of citizens who voted on Measure Z in 2016. The initial survey release will attempt to reach neighborhoods in the Monterey Bay area that total a population of over 3,200. The survey will consist of 5 questions only, with two questions asking the respondent to weigh the value of their responses. Demographic information requested will be: Age, Gender, Education level, Political

party affiliation (if any), Ethnicity, Veteran, Self-employed/Business Owner, and Land owner.

*Procedure/Data Processing and Analysis.*

In both qualitative and quantitative studies, data will be processed and analyzed from participant observations, survey responses, and any County and/or City Council meeting minutes that might reveal corroborated data that pertains to the research.

*Analysis technique.*

The research will attempt to correlate the requested demographic information to either a ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ vote on Measure Z by the individual. It will also attempt to correlate responses to factors already revealed as successful factors in campaigning for ballot measures. This correlation will highlight the most effective means by which to campaign for support of the Measure, and will provide insight that leads to recommendations to public administrators. Will also attempt to analyze responses from the survey to ascertain if and what percentage of voters would change their vote had they known beforehand the full implications and ramifications of Measure Z passage and implementation.

*Internal and external validity.*

There is a high level of confidence in the research model and design to produce reasonable results that support the dependent and independent variables. The most notable threat to internal validity is the inability of the key informant interviews and the survey to reach a representative sample of voters from all regions of Monterey County. In particular, there will be little collection of data from south Monterey County, where the impact of Measure Z was felt most directly (due to the presence of oil and gas extraction operations). Nonetheless, despite the

limited time available to collect data, it is believed the scope and cross-section of key informants reached allows for a reasonable confidence in the results and findings.

Although the research methodology and results and findings may be recreated in areas outside Monterey County, external validity is more difficult to ensure, as the results of the study cannot be guaranteed in other California counties, and especially outside California. Similar outcomes elsewhere would be dependent on similar populations, demographics, political landscape, and the presence of the oil industry to generate discussion and concern regarding oil and gas extraction issues as related to the environment; however, it is possible to make a generalized comparison to other populations or situations.

#### **Chapter 4: Results and Analysis**

This chapter presents an analysis of interviews and surveys conducted to support and challenge the assumptions. Out of an approximate 3,400 potential respondents, only 44 completed the survey (0.13% response rate). The interviews of key informants totaled 18 and employed three different methods of collecting data: face-to-face, telephonic, and email correspondence. As discussed in Chapter 3, the research and data gathering method employed for this Case Study is considered a Mixed-Method, “Exploratory” design, which utilizes a 2-phase, sequential approach. The initial phase of data collection is the Qualitative phase, whereby structured (but open-ended) interviews are conducted with Key Informants (such as Supervisors,

Mayors, Council, Business leaders, media, activists, community members) to gain an understanding of factors relating to the ballot measure process. During this phase, possible underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations were recorded. The results of this first-phase effort were used to create and shape the Quantitative data collection phase, whereby surveys and focused questions were distributed to a wider audience in order to arrive at statistically-based conclusions. Results and findings for both phases follow.

*Qualitative (Phase I): Interviews Results and Findings.*

The qualitative portion of the research consisted of 6 structured questions that were asked of all interviewees. Additionally, if an interviewee was an elected official or previously served as an elected official, 2 additional questions were asked that applied directly to the experiences while serving in an elected capacity. Questions were also designed to be open-ended and allow for opinion and extrapolation. The goal was to search for insights and revelations into the origins and reasons for Measure Z that would help shape more specific questions for the survey design used in the Quantitative Phase II.

The results of each survey question were examined individually for in-depth analysis. For both the survey and interviews, the researcher gathered high quality content interviews from key informants/stakeholders. An attempt was made to take a fairly equal number of representatives from the targeted groupings (private citizen non-active in policymaking, private citizen active in policymaking, elected official, public administrator).

Eighteen total interviews were conducted with key informants. Of those, 9 interviews were done via face-to-face (FtF) interviews. An additional 5 key informant interviews were initiated by email, and 4 key informants answered questions via telephone. These numbers reflect the method by which questions were conveyed to the respondents and by which they were

answered. In 11 cases, the research also included follow-up communications via email and/or telephonic. Six questions (or 9, in cases of elected officials) were emailed to each participant and they provided their answers directly on the questionnaire and returned it to the researcher.

*Qualitative (Phase I): Interview Questions and Results:*

*1. In what ways are special interest groups a positive or negative aspect of the democratic process in Monterey County?*

Special interest groups “force governmental bodies to govern.” (M. Duan, personal communication, June 12, 2018) Most participants viewed special interest groups and ballot measures as a needed option inside the democratic process. However, many interviewed acknowledged a level of trepidation that special interest groups are both a positive and negative part of the process. Regarding the former, interest groups put the people inside the policymaking process. If you disagree with politicians, you can recall them, or put a measure on the ballot. The most common refrain from interviewees was regarding the opportunity ballot measures bring to the voice of the people, and imploring elected officials to “Listen to the people -- support the populist message!” (A. Hoffa, personal communication, May 31, 2018) and, “Ballot measures allow public to speak out when not heard.” (N. Amadeo, personal communication, June 4, 2018)

The negative aspect is that it can be a “derailing” process to the normal flow of local policymaking. (B. Delgado, personal communication, June 11, 2018) Ballot measures passed at the County level can be contradictory to State law or Federal laws upon their implementation. As with Measure Z, legal challenges can result in costly expenditure of County resources, to include time and money. Other comments to describe the negative impact are enlightening: “Ballot Measures mean something went wrong -- elected officials screwed up,” says one of

Monterey's business leaders, more than implying the County leadership has not done its job. (M. Leffell, personal communication, May 29, 2018)

One elected official bemoaned the inconvenience and extra investment of time and resources that accompany ballot measures by claiming, "Ballot measures force changes to the General Plan." ("Delta," personal communication, June 12, 2018) Even the media acknowledged the danger of special interest group influence: "Lobbying groups are perfectly fine...the negative issue is if they spread false and misleading information." (A. McElhinney, personal communication, June 6, 2018) And finally, one political party leader recognized that ballot measures and special interest groups give birth to more politics, more campaigning, and more less-than-clear rhetoric by all involved, "Obfuscating the truth is disingenuous on both sides." (J. Gorman, personal communication, May 30, 2018)

## *2. How do special interest groups influence policymaking and governing in Monterey County?*

Simply, when ballot measures are passed, those who govern and make policy are obliged to follow the laws and engage accordingly. The influence and impact can mean changes in ordinances, changes in policies or procedures, and allowing or disallowing activities. This impact to governing is realized in taxpayer dollars. Any change made to policy costs money -- dollars that could have been otherwise been spent on "the needs of the communities we serve... but now be redirected to additional costs not born from concerns of the residents." (M. LeBarre, personal communication, June 21, 2018)

Other comments noted the "liberal elites on the Monterey peninsula want to protect the environment at all costs" even at the expense of lost jobs and career opportunities for the public. (M. Duan, personal communication, June 12, 2018) This approach seems to play well to the voter population here in Monterey County, said others.

*3. What are your feelings about the 2016 Monterey County ballot initiative Measure Z?*

There was less quality response to this question in comparison with the others. Instead, the dialogue and answers quickly veered into open-ended discussions about personal opinions about a variety of aspects of the Measure and the politics surrounding. Some said that most ballot measures are “void of facts, untruths, and not-full truths.” (S. Emerson, personal communication, June 4, 2018) The Mayor of Del Rey Oaks (core town on Monterey peninsula) agreed, saying, “There was a lot of misinformation put out about Fracking and a lot of scare tactics were involved.” (J. Edelen, personal communication, June 8, 2018)

Many opined here that a vocal minority has the ability to negate the power of the majority, and that unintended consequences can be painful to taxpayers. Surprisingly, one elected official said that ballot measures on environmental topics are frequently successful in Monterey County because, “Voters are apathetic.” (“Alpha,” personal communication, June 5, 2018)

“No one likes to see policy made at the ballot box,” said current County Supervisor of District 5, Mary Adams. “But, if elected officials can’t do their job, then people have to take matters into their own hands. Thanks to the ballot measure process, the will of the people cannot be silenced. Even if you don’t agree, you have to listen to the will of the people.” (M. Adams, personal communication, June 7, 2018)

*4. Do you believe ballot measures such as Measure Z are an effective method of engaging the general public in the policymaking process in Monterey County?*

To this open-ended question, most respondents allowed that special interest groups have a certain amount of power, albeit in the hands of a minority. That disproportionate power of the minority can get the measure on a ballot and get legislation enacted--what is sometimes referred



to as the "tyranny of the minority." This is not always a negative thing, as ballot measures and environmental groups can effectively keep elected officials honest and in check. In one recent case in Monterey County, the environmental group Keep Fort Ord Wild was successful in helping vote down a measure that would have resulted in inappropriate development, resulting in a positive impact by insisting public officials adhere to regulated land use methods. (M. Duan, personal communication, June 12, 2018)

Some interviewees allowed that ballot measures reflect the resurgence of a grassroots democratic processes. (M. Hsai-Coron, personal communication, May 4, 2018) In a straightforward response, Mayor Edelen agreed, saying, "Yes -- we are a Representative Democracy and citizens have the right to organize and lobby for whatever side of an issue they want." (J. Edelen, personal communication, June 8, 2018)

*5. Name the factors you believe led to Measure Z's approval.*

This question elicited the most direct responses. Many respondents shared the same opinions, with a consensus and 72% overlap of agreement on the first two on this list. Here are the 5 most popular factors, with representative quotes for each:

- a. The environment. The respondents allow that we live in an area of the country known for environmental awareness and a high level of sensitivity and support for environmental issues. The emotion of an environmental issue is manifested in the voters as "a fear for our future, and a sense of responsibility." (N. Amadeo, personal communication, June 4, 2018) California's proclivity to support and promote environmental initiatives "is pervasive in Monterey County." (D. Allion, personal communication, May 30, 2018)
- b. Positive/Effective media campaign. Well-organized involvement of many environmental groups (including some outside of Monterey County) Measure Z was terrifically organized by a

group of passionate and motivated volunteers--that's a recipe for success.” (M. Duan, personal communication, June 12, 2018) The message was on point and a perfect example of a populist message that resonated with area voters. (B. Delgado, personal communication, June 11, 2018)

c. Unfavorable attack on Big Business and Big Oil. Some respondents felt the measure was simply a referendum against capitalistic big business in Monterey County. “The YES on Measure Z campaign by Protect Monterey County focused on whether you were for or against big corporations.” (D. Potter personal communication, June 6, 2018)

d. Uninformed public/Lack of public awareness. This implies ignorance of the voters as to the details and ramifications of the Measure. “Public doesn't read the details...they primarily respond to sound bites.” (M. Leffell, personal communication, May 29, 2018)

e. Politics. The Measure was seen by many as a liberal, left-wing cause, supported by the Democratic party and outside interests who have an interest in seeing fracking fail. “Demographics in Monterey County are such that any liberal-supported measure is going to find a majority.” (S. Emerson, personal communication, June 4, 2018)

*6. How might special interest group activities supporting or opposing ballot measures neglect the broader public interest?*

The public interest can be neglected when ballot measures are introduced because the spirit of cooperation “goes out the window -- the spirit of consensus is removed.” (D. Donahue, personal communication, June 1, 2018) Special interest groups have the power to raise an issue and propose solutions that can be even more drastic than had the issue been dealt with by public officials as part of the policymaking effort. This phenomenon occurred with Measure Z when, had the Board of Supervisors taken the advice of their staff (who had researched the issue) and passed a simple referendum against the practice of fracking in Monterey County, the issue

might have done and out of the public concern with little impact to actual oil and gas production in the County, and at little cost to the taxpayers. By leaving the popular issue to the special interest group Protect Monterey County, the fracking issue became an “environmental call to arms,” that sparked the public’s interest and resulted in a much more serious and impactful list of restrictive measures against the oil and gas industry. (M. Adams, personal communication, June 7, 2018)

A local Monterey County Councilmember was adamant about putting emotion over practicality: “When people become emotional rather than logical, that impacts the public process and impacts the decision to do the right thing for the public.” (D. Allion, personal communication, May 30, 2018)

(NOTE: At this point, if the interviewee was an elected official or a public administrator, the following 2 questions were added to the engagement.)

*7. How do special interest groups and/or ballot initiatives impact your ability to make policy and/or govern?*

All respondents agreed that elected officials and public administrators are there to govern on behalf of the communities they serve. Almost all, as well, admit to friction with special interest groups who have a County-wide agenda that may not jive with the overall interests for a city and their populace. As Mayor Mike LeBarre of King City, stated, “Outside interest groups advocating for ballot initiatives typically have their own agenda that frequently does not match up with community-identified needs or vision. He adds that these types of groups and their initiatives can supersede local authority and even dictate policy in areas in which they do not even live. (M. LeBarre, personal communication, June 21, 2018)

Mayor Edelen adds, “I don’t bend to political pressure. [Special interest groups] do cause

me to spend an inordinate amount of time speaking with their members who refuse to try to understand the other side of the issue.” (J. Edelen, personal communication, June 8, 2018)

*8. What strategies for collaborating with special interest groups have you found to be effective in incorporating ballot initiatives into the policymaking process?*

Most respondents believed early and thorough collaboration was not only doable, but necessary. This effort takes foresight and an investment in time, however, and several respondents indicated it was difficult to predict what issues But, most of these elected officials believed making the effort to collaborate was tantamount to good leadership. As Mayor Delgado replied, “Effective leadership is listening to the voice of the people. We need to have the elected officials and the populace on the same page.” (B. Delgado, personal communication, June 11, 2018) Supervisor Adams made the point very clearly: “I believe in backdoor collaboration wholeheartedly. Compromise is not a bad word -- that’s how our nation exists. (M. Adams, personal communication, June 7, 2018)

*Summary of Key Interview Findings.*

Overall, the results of the interviews portray a variety of mixed opinions regarding the usefulness of ballot measures and their implementation by environmental groups in Monterey County. All agree, to some degree, that the ballot measure process is a useful, albeit sometimes painful, that must be accepted if, for nothing else, to give the people a voice in their governance.

Leadership is one of the key, if not THE key, factor in developments that led to Measure Z. Rather, the absence of leadership. The Board of Supervisors had the opportunity to pass a law to ban fracking, but by not taking action, they deferred the issue to a public vote. The public had to take matters into their own hands. So, the resulting language of Measure Z was more restrictive than it would have been had the County Board passed it themselves. So, in an

unfortunate turn, the Board's inaction ended up costing the County over \$10 million.

Many interviewees felt that partisan beliefs and politics played a significant role in the outcome of Measure Z. Most assumed that an environmental issue/ballot measure would be largely supported by Democrats and opposed by Republicans. In fact, the Monterey County Democratic Party did lend their support to Measure Z. This general response during the Qualitative Phase I data gathering created the need to develop survey questions to test directly the premise that political beliefs were a distinct and influential factor in the successful passage of Measure Z.

Simple and straightforward messaging resonated with the voters and essentially asked them to decide if fracking is bad or good (YES or NO on Measure Z). Respondents believe it is most important to be accurate, transparent, and truthful with ballot initiatives and policy making. This gives all the best opportunity to understand the reasoning behind support or opposition, and to ensure the initiative is working on their behalf for the benefit of the greater good.

Despite its imperfect nature, the democratic process that allows for ballot measures is appreciated and even cherished--sometimes begrudgingly--but, as the respondents acknowledge, it allows for checks and balances on those we vote into office and expect to lead us wisely. If elected officials can't do their job, then people have to take matters into their own hands. Thanks to the ballot measure process, the will of the people can always be heard.

#### *Quantitative (Phase 2): Survey Questions and Results.*

Using the concerns and factors unearthed in the Qualitative Phase I effort, an appropriate survey was able to be designed to reflect those factors, with a goal of eliciting more measurable responses and data that could be used to formulate more quantifiable conclusions. The Phase II survey is a 5-minute/16-question effort and was initially launched via SurveyMonkey. The

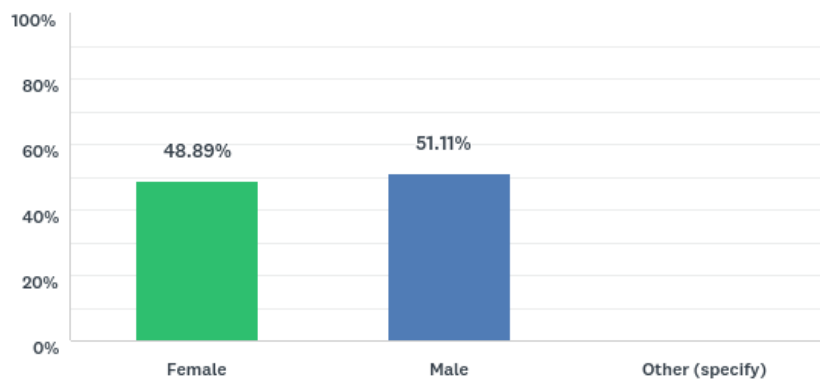
survey was posted on NextDoor social media network, shared on Facebook, and also sent via e-mail to individuals from the researcher's personal contact list. The survey was left open through final draft of the paper.

The 16 survey questions were purposefully crafted to: 1) gather demographic data; 2) identify factors that contributed to the successful passing of the environmentally-focused Monterey County Measure Z; 3) determine most impactful aspects of Measure Z campaign; and, 4) assess voter remorse for supporting/opposing Measure Z.

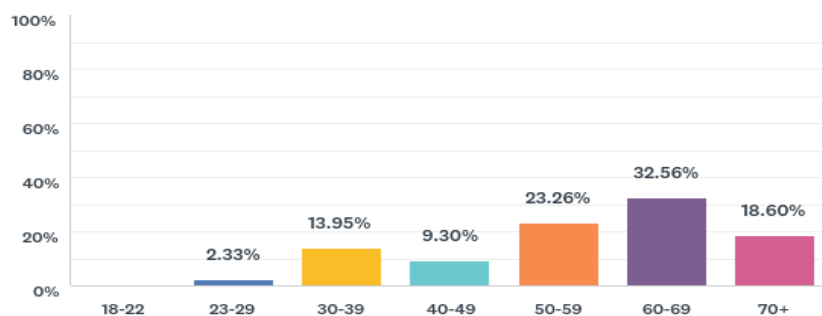
A review of all survey responses:

#### **Survey: Demographic questions (8 questions)**

**Question 1 (Q1).** *What is your gender?* N= 45. Female 22, Male 23.

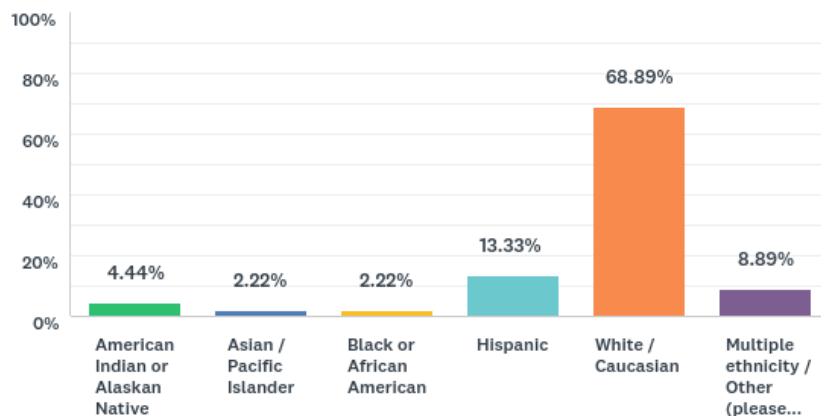


**Q2.** *What is your age?* N= 43.

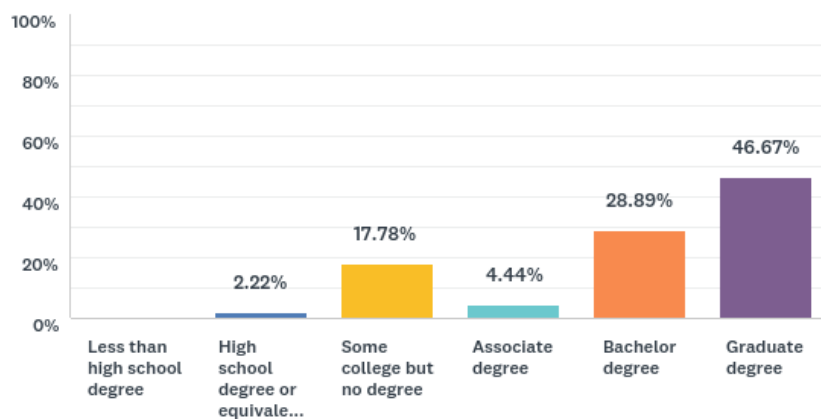


**Q3.** *Which race/ethnicity best describes you? (Please choose only one.)* N= 45. 69%

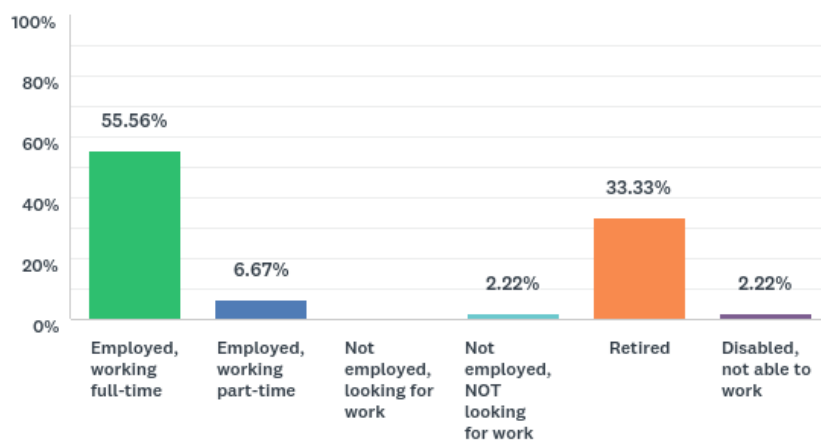
White/Caucasian. Hispanic (13%) only other ethnicity in double figures.



**Q4.** *What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?* N= 45.

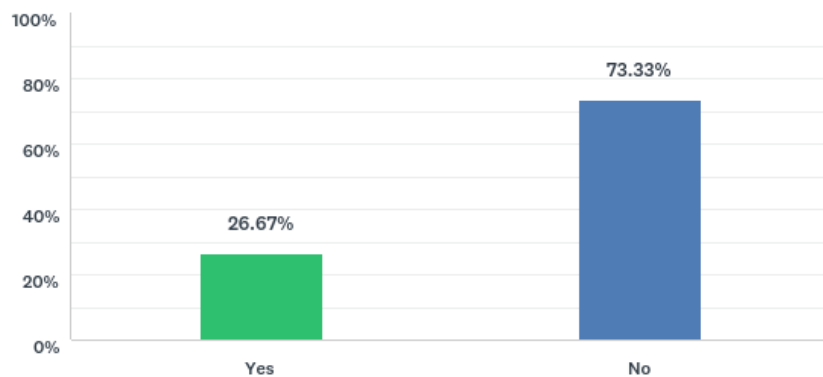


**Q5.** Which of the following categories best describes your employment status? N= 45.

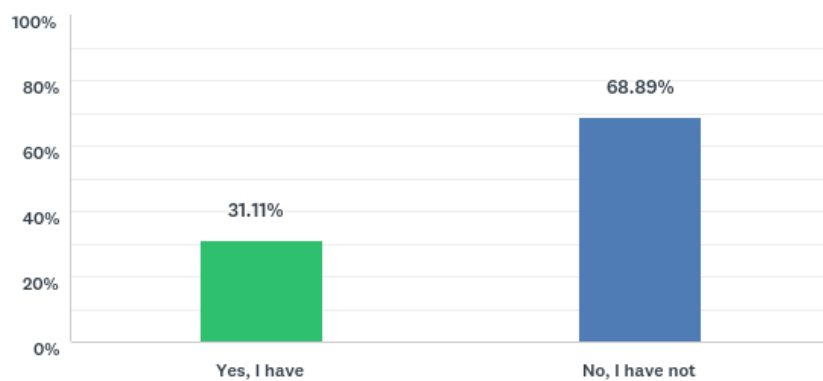


**Q6.** Does anyone in your household own a business or a farm? N= 45. This question utilized to see if some possible connection between landowners and opposing Measure Z.

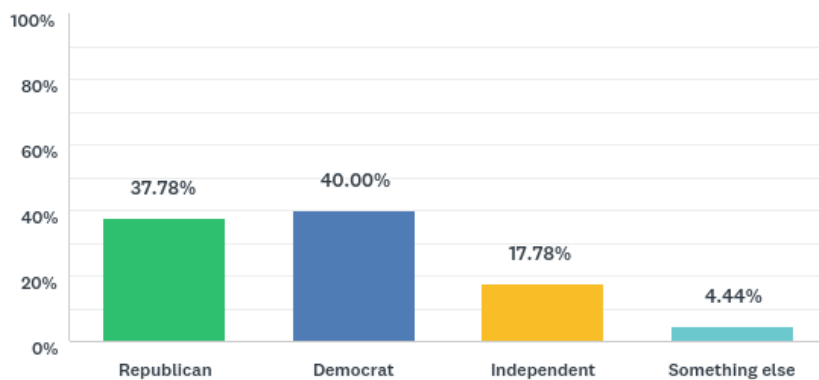




**Q7.** *Have you ever served in any branch of the United States military, or not?* N= 45.



**Q8.** *Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?* N= 45.

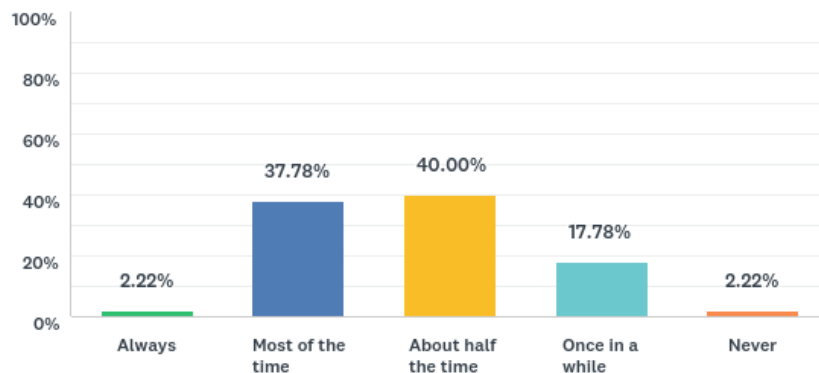


In summarizing these important demographic details, survey results indicate the majority of respondents are predominantly of Caucasian ethnicity; likely to be somewhere between 50-69 years of age; highly educated (¾ have at least a 4-year degree); employed, or retired from employment; and, most likely not business owners nor Veterans of the US military. The survey assumes no political bias due to the two major political parties being reasonably equal in representation. Survey results also assume no gender bias in the survey results, as both genders are fairly equally represented (Female/Male = 49/51%). The excellent and equal political between the two major American political parties, serves to minimize the assumption that political affiliation might tend to skew responses. This equality allows other factors to be examined as more impactful to the public's voting decisions. The equality in the responses regarding partisanship and gender helps establish results as being balanced and likely not to reflect those respective biases. The only potential bias worth noting is the high level of Caucasian respondents could allow for less sympathetic to the potential impacts of fracking by the oil and gas industry to the more Hispanic-centric population of south Monterey County.

However, this is a generalization that cannot be proven and a variable that cannot be assumed to have impact one way or another.

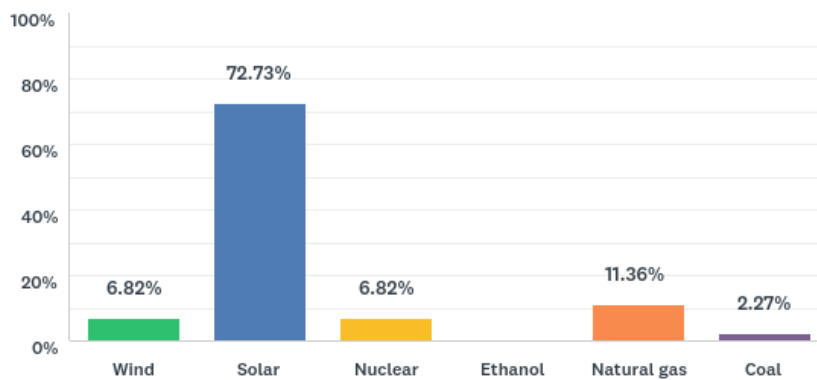
*Survey: Environmental-related questions (2):*

**Q9.** *When people get involved in trying to solve environmental problems, how often do you think they make things better?* N= 45.



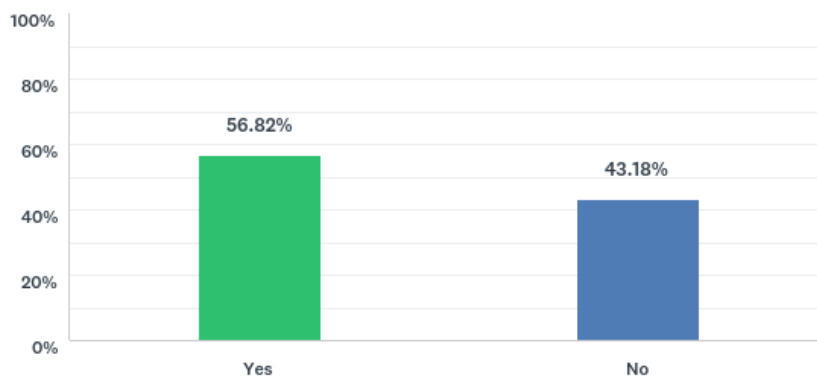
**Q10.** *Which of the following alternative energy sources do you think will be MOST important in the next 10 years?* N= 44. Summary of demographic survey results indicate the public believes ballot measures involving environmental topics are worthwhile and tend to make a positive difference. Q9 was designed to elicit thought on actual impact of ballot measures to successfully improve the environment. Q10 is the least important entry in the survey with regard to impact on the research problem, but was intentionally included as a random ‘environmental-related’ question to evoke a sense that the environment factor is important, and the survey (and surveyor) is designed to help solve a problem or better the process. The question also asks for the responder to voice their opinion in a more open-ended manner--in essence, it gives THEM an opportunity to voice their own educated answer and perhaps makes it feel as if they are providing

useful information. The question also helps create a sense of neutrality in the survey and to hopefully temper any bias that may emerge in any other questions or questions.



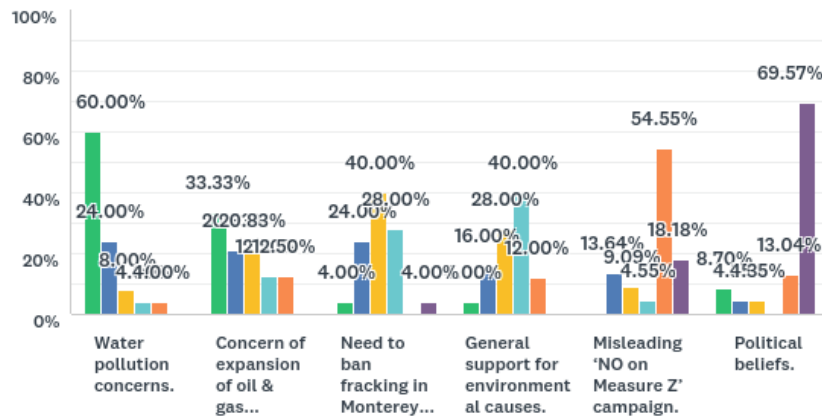
Survey: Measure Z-related questions (6):

**Q11.** Did you vote to support the 2016 Measure Z ballot initiative to ban hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”) and restrict oil and gas operations in Monterey County? N= 44. The Yes-No percentage of respondents to the survey almost exactly reflects the actual 56%/44% 2016 vote.



**Q12.** If you voted YES for Measure Z, please rank from 1-6 the most important factors that led to your decision to support the ballot initiative. (With 1 = MOST IMPORTANT and 6 = LEAST

IMPORTANT. Or, 'NA') \*If you opposed Measure Z, please move ahead to the following question. N= 32.



(For Q12 and Q13, which require the respondent to rank the factors, respondents were limited to respond to 6 factors -- versus the originally-planned 9, so as to lessen confusion/frustration.

*Concern over pollution of water table in Monterey County* was the factor most frequently expressed as Most Important. Interesting to note the fewest number of respondents chose to answer this question, perhaps for the following reasons: question was the first to require more than a simple choice for an answer; the first question with complex answer scheme requiring complex thought and answer process; and, individuals did not want to reveal their reasons to support/oppose Measure Z. Most notably, respondents showed that 'Political Beliefs' was the least significant factor in their decision-making process, which was contrary to the paper's original assumption that the 'Environment' was the most important factor in the voter's calculus.

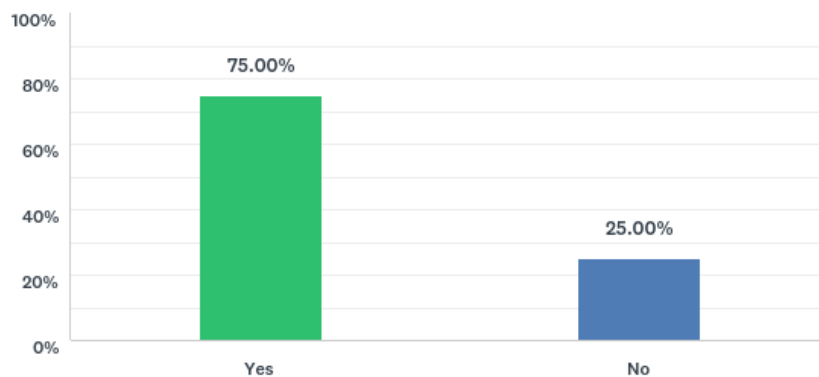
**Q13.** *If you voted NO on Measure Z, please rank from 1-6 the most important factors that led to your decision to oppose the ballot initiative.*

*(With 1 = MOST IMPORTANT and 6 = LEAST IMPORTANT.)* N= 34.



Concern over losing tax revenue for County recipients such as schools and first responders was the factor most frequently expressed as 'Most Important.' It is again interesting to note that /Politics' plays the least important role in voter decision-making, further supporting the results seen in Q12,

**Q14.** *Do you feel ballot measures such as Measure Z are an effective method of engaging the general public in the policymaking process of Monterey County?* N= 44.



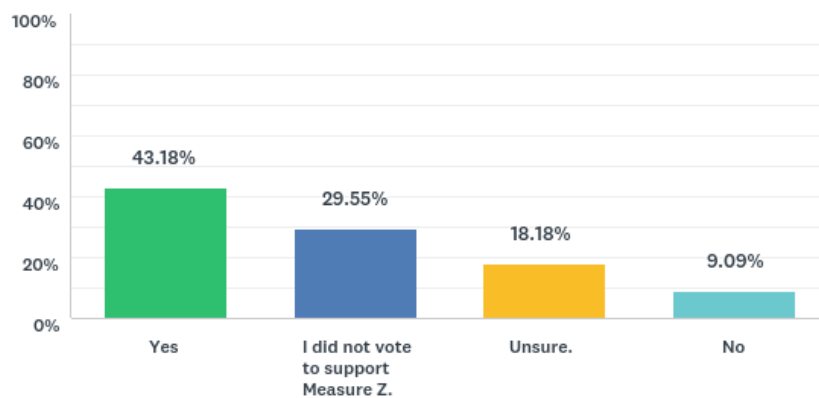
This is the single strongest response to any of the survey questions.  $\frac{3}{4}$  of respondents believe ballot measures are an effective method for impacting policymaking in the County. What is more interesting in this overall response is the  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the people do NOT believe ballot measures to be effective. Based on the qualitative responses received from the key informants, a correlation could be made that these 25% could be those current or former elected officials who have experience in dealing with ballot measures and special interest groups.

**Q15.** *Do you believe the ballot measure/initiative process is an effective and necessary option in the democratic process of governing Monterey County? (Please use the space available to explain why or why not.)* N= 37. This was more of a narrative response. This was the question designed to elicit a narrative response and allow the respondents to an opportunity to voice some opinions beyond the Yes/No options. This provided some enlightenment behind the responses. Of those that indicated a specific Yes (positive towards ballot measures) or No (or, negative tone) as part of their answer, Yes was reported 81% of the time. See Appendix XX for listing of

notable responses. To get the tone of the narrative responses, here is a “Word Cloud” generated from the Q15 survey answers that reflects the most common themes of the responses:

gives us initiatives facts vote allows public citizens issues process  
Yes educated people take voters work measures front time  
important

**Q16.** *Knowing now that the implementation of Measure Z was significantly delayed and the language was stripped down to include ONLY a ban of fracking; and, considering the resources expended by the County to address the lawsuits challenging Measure Z, would you still vote to support Measure Z?* N= 44.



Survey results here indicate an unanticipated finding, which is detailed below in the summary.

*Summary of Key Findings of Survey Data.* The overall results of the survey showed that supporters of Measure Z identify as more pro-environment than as members of a particular political party. People believe that ballot measures are necessary, but not really effective. Responders indicated they want an opportunity to vote to protect the environment, but that most voters often don't take the time to become educated. Lack of education on the language of the



issue can lead to legal challenges, lawsuits, can divide people over opinions, and may result is a vehicle to replace good policy.”

Most respondents felt the ballot measure process was needed, but almost all were concerned about the effectiveness and the ultimate frequency of sought-after positive results. Research notes the survey results indicate "Partisanship/Political Party" is the least of factors when voting to support/not support ballot measures. The survey anticipated that choice would have been one of the strongest factors.

Question 16 revealed an unexpected result. When asked if respondents would change their vote from supporting Measure Z to not supporting Measure Z -- had they known the delay, the cost, and dilution of the final legal decision -- 9.09% of respondents said they would change their vote on Measure Z from yes to no. 18.18% also responded they were unsure if they would change their vote given what they know now. So, if we take half of the ‘Unsure’ percentage and add that to the 9.09% who would definitely change their vote from yes to no -- again, with a No vote meaning to allow fracking in Monterey County -- then that extrapolation concludes Measure Z would not have passed in 2016 had the voters understood the ramifications of approving measure Z (by a difference of 45% vs the actual vote of 56%).

This result implies that voters did not receive the necessary information on the ballot measure in order to make an informed decision or what the populace needs in order to implement the most beneficial policies for the citizenry.

The Mayor of King City in southern Monterey County stood to have his population impacted the most by far from the passage of Measure Z. Revenue from the oil and gas industry in his region (the only region of the County that has oil and gas production) would be lost, as would jobs. The secondary and tertiary impact to the economy, schools, and general revenue

would be significant, too. Therefore his perspective on this issue is understandably skewed towards protection of his constituents and local interests. (M. LeBarre, June 21)

A major takeaway from this study is that voters vote from a passionate place in their hearts and in line with their moral fiber. That is well and good, but interviewees acknowledged that informed voters help create more effective policy. Voting based on passion reflects the passion of the public, but may not always reflect the best decisions for the very same public.

In sum, public administrators in Monterey County must recognize that the passion of voters to support environmental measures can override more logical, educated, and political approaches to resolving the issue in question.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations**

### *Conclusions.*

Conclusions based on the findings from the collected qualitative and quantitative data of the study can be categorized into several groupings. These groupings reflect the results of both phases of the mixed-method Explanatory research methodology and design:

a. Environmental issues are a hot button topic that elicit a high level of passion from the people of Monterey County. County citizens feel strongly the public makes a positive difference when it gets involved in environmental issues, which consequently leads to a higher level of volunteer and voter involvement. Due to ramifications foreseen and unforeseen, these types of measures have the potential to attract outside interests with larger agenda. In the vernacular, environmental issues are considered ‘hot-button,’ ‘front burner’ issues for Monterey County voters that elicit more a passionate response than tax-based initiatives,

b. The major factor in voting to support Measure Z was concern over the specific issue of pollution of the water table. An original sub-hypothesis surmised that political beliefs would be a determining factor in voting to support Measure Z and the danger to the environment. But, according to survey data, partisan affiliation was the very least important factor in determining support for, OR, opposition to, Measure Z.

c. Voter ‘ignorance’ of issues is critical to success. As with many ballot measures, Measure Z passage depended in significant part on the majority of public not being willing or able to research the details of the entire ballot measure. This is a common phenomenon among voters everywhere, especially when an initiative contains complicated layers of details that can have implications upon enactment. Special interest groups (including those driving an environment-focused initiative) depend on the proclivity of the voter to respond more emotionally to a “populist cause,” and to not fully educate themselves in the details and ramifications of the initiative. Special interest groups play upon this proclivity by campaigning with a simple message they hope will resonate strongly enough with voters.

d. Ineffective and untimely leadership of Monterey County precipitated the need to create the special interest group Protect Monterey County who rallied a large support base and passed the

ballot initiative. Subsequent costs to challenge and litigate Measure Z led to County costs of over \$10,000,000. By not recognizing the concern and will of the general public on this environmentally-sensitive matter, the inaction of the Board of Supervisors triggered a time-consuming and costly legal battle that ultimately resulted in little change to the environmental and political landscape.

e. Ballot measures are a necessary but frequently divisive form of democracy. If public administrators and elected leadership are ineffective and/or non-responsive to important issues, the public must have recourse and ability to address the issue. Nonetheless, ballot measures tend to reflect poor governing and, subsequently, are seen as a less desirable method by which to make and enact policy.

#### *Recommendations.*

The following recommendations are primarily directed at the Monterey County Board of Supervisors, but also to all County public administrators whose duty it is to serve the citizenry:

- a. Campaign for public awareness -- use resources to ensure ballot measure language is clear.
- b. Be in tune and recognize the will of your constituency.
- c. Anticipate and do your homework on environmental issues.
- d. Listen to staff recommendations --assess and consider ramifications and costs.
- e. Ensure timely and honest collaboration with groups on emerging issues.
- f. Encourage voters to embrace the democratic process and participate.
- g. Create policy for the greater public good -- not special interest groups.

#### *Areas for Further Research.*

A suggested area for further research is: the impact of outside influences on ballot measures that concern environmental issues, especially fracking. During the research for this paper, the author became intrigued over the consistent finding that many environmental initiatives on the ballot at the city and county levels were supported overtly and covertly by pro-environment groups or movement from the state- and/or national-levels, such as the Sierra Club, Oil Change International, Greenpeace USA, and the Center for Biological Diversity. Groups such as these are constantly on the lookout for a ‘battleground’ such as Monterey County, where they can lend support and win precedence-setting legislation. A precedence set against fracking in the Measure Z vote in Monterey can be cited in other cases around the state or nation to further the goals of the movement. There is also strong evidence that, in order to protect and ensure their dominance in the worldwide oil and gas markets, Russia has been a silent yet significant supporter of anti-fracking movements around the world, to include the USA. Less fracking equates to less oil and gas production, and therefore, less competition for the Russian nationalized energy company, Gazprom. Ballot measures impacting the environment are not generated, supported, campaigned for, or funded in a local fishbowl. The ramifications are too important. The stakes too high. Environmental issues such as fracking have far-reaching implications. That influence of outside entities on environmental ballot measures and the impact to our democracy would be a fascinating research topic.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**QUALITATIVE (Phase I):**

**Structured Questions for Key Informants**

**Intro:**

My name is William Terry Bare and I am completing my Master's Degree in Public Administration at Golden Gate University. I'm in the data collection phase of my CAPSTONE paper and would very much value your input. I'd like to get your perspectives on the impact of environmental special interest group ballot measures, by using the 2016 Monterey County Measure Z as a case study. Your answers will be kept confidential and anonymous if desired, and will be used by me only for the purpose of completing my degree.

Your input is important -- thanks for participating & helping complete my research!

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**6 interview questions (for all respondents):**

1. In what ways are environmental special interest groups a positive or negative aspect of the democratic process and the broader public interest in Monterey County?
2. How do environmental special interest groups and/or ballot initiatives influence policymaking and governing in Monterey County?
3. What are your feelings about the campaign to promote the 2016 Monterey County ballot initiative Measure Z?
4. Do you believe ballot measures such as Measure Z are an effective method of engaging the general public in the policymaking process in Monterey County?
5. Name the factors you believe led to Measure Z's approval.

6. How might special interest group activities supporting or opposing ballot measures neglect the broader public interest?

**3 Additional Questions (for Elected Officials):**

7. How do special interest groups and/or ballot initiatives impact your ability to make policy and/or govern?

8. In what ways, if any, have environmental-focused ballot measures created a challenge to the County's public policymaking process?

9. What strategies for collaborating with special interest groups have you found to be effective in incorporating ballot initiatives into the policymaking process?