

Support HB 18-1352

Setbacks for Oil And Gas Facilities School Property & Playgrounds
Sponsored by Representatives Mike Foote & Matt Gray

Colorado law states that the minimum mandatory distance for new oil and gas facilities is 1,000 feet from any “high-occupancy building,” which includes schools. However, in practice this means that the measurement starts from *the building itself* and not the property line. School children - who play on surrounding sports fields and outdoor areas and attend classes in modular classrooms - are significantly less protected as a result.

Recent accidents and drilling proposals near schools

Between 2006 and 2015, a total of 116 fires and explosions in Colorado were reported at oil and gas operations – roughly one fire or explosion every month.¹ A fire or explosion near a school could have dire consequences. Just in the last year, a football game in Greeley, Colorado was evacuated due to a nearby well’s valve failure, and there have been several dozen oil and gas related fires or explosions statewide.

What HB18-1352 does:

- **Protect areas where children play.** Measuring from the school boundary would mean that playgrounds, athletic fields, outdoor lunch areas, modular classrooms, and other areas used on a daily basis by school children are now included in the law.
- **Increase consistency.** This bill treats the oil and gas industry like other industries engaged in activities requiring setbacks. Denver, Aurora and Pueblo all have 1,000-foot mandatory perimeters from the *property line* of schools with regard to selling, growing, transferring or distributing marijuana. Similarly, the federal “drug-free school” statute creates a zone within 1,000 feet of the school’s *property line*.
- **Better protection from pollutants from oil and gas facilities that are harmful to the health of children.** Oil and natural gas facilities release particulate matter, nitrogen oxide, and volatile organic compounds, such as benzene and toluene, that negatively impact human health, which have been shown to disproportionately impact children. These pollutants are dangerous enough for children that Colorado has an idling law for diesel vehicles, including school buses, that limits idling because similar pollutants are emitted.
- **Affords more protection from accidents.** The effects of an oil and gas accident are not restricted to 1,000 feet. For example, a recent well blowout in Hudson, Colorado sprayed a mist of oil, gas, and drilling waste water over an area 2,000 feet long by 1,000 feet wide. Additionally, in Frederick, Colorado, an oil storage tank fire 1,800 feet from Legacy Elementary School required students and teachers to shelter in place.

Oil and gas development is an industrial activity involving volatile and toxic substances, and accidents do occur—sometimes with dangerous and deadly consequences. While we can’t guarantee that no accidents will occur, even if we take every precaution, we can protect children who play outside of their schools and child care centers every day. Keeping oil and gas development 1,000 feet away from playgrounds and sports fields is simply common sense.

For more information please contact

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¹ Blair, Benjamin D., et al. "Is reporting “significant damage” transparent? Assessing fire and explosion risk at oil and gas operations in the United States." *Energy Research & Social Science* 29 (2017): 36-43.

Organizational Endorsements

Western Colorado Congress

Colorado Municipal League

Natural Resources Defense Council

Padres Y Jovenes Unidos

Mi Familia Vota

Conservation Colorado

Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials

Sierra Club

Wilderness Society

Boulder County Commissioners

Adams County Commissioners

League of Oil and Gas Impacted Citizens