# Fracking Enters The CA Governor's Race

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LOS ANGELES (AP) — In a year when California Democrats are worried about motivating their voters, Gov. Jerry Brown heard another unwelcome message Saturday: Some Democratic activists are bristling over his administration's policies on hydraulic fracturing, or fracking.

Appearing at a state Democratic Party convention in Los Angeles, Brown found himself forced to speak over a noisy group of sign-waving protesters in his first major campaign speech since formally declaring his candidacy last month.

"Just listen a moment," Brown pleaded at one point, as the protesters bellowed "No fracking" and waved "Another Democrat Against Fracking" signs just steps from the podium where he was speaking.

State Democratic conventions can be boisterous gatherings, but the protesters provided an unscripted distraction in what was otherwise expected to be a unified show of support for the 75-year-old governor, who appears headed for an unprecedented fourth term in the heavily Democratic state.

Fracking "gets to the oil that is the dirtiest oil on the planet," said delegate Ken Jones of Greenbrae in Marin County, who was among those waving signs. "It's an unsafe practice. To allow it to continue, when we know it's unsafe, is a crime."

Brown has placed climate change and environmental issues at the core of his re-election platform, but he's been dogged by those critical of his decision to allow fracking of oil and natural gas in California. He's being pushed to order a moratorium to block it.

Brown never directly mentioned fracking in his 13-minute speech, though he cataloged a list of measures to deal with a gradually heating planet, from expanding the use of electric cars and renewable energy to restoring drained wetlands.

Making his case for re-election, Brown said California had emerged from the ravages of the recession and was now leading the nation on issues like immigration reform and environmental protection, while Washington remains hopelessly gridlocked.

"California is working," he said. "California is back."

Brown is expected to easily secure enough votes in the June primary to move to the general election. In November, he is expected to face one of two little-known Republicans, former U.S. Treasury official Neel Kashkari of Laguna Beach or state Assemblyman Tim Donnelly from the San Bernardino Mountains community of Twin

Peaks.

In a statement, Kashkari said Brown's claim that the state had rebounded was hollow because millions of people remained out of work or financially struggling. He called him "blindly disconnected" from those living in poverty.

In an election season that's expected to be favorable for national Republicans, state Democratic leaders have been fretting about getting their voters to the polls in the state, with no hot race at the top of the ticket to generate excitement and polls showing many voters disenchanted with Congress and the Legislature

Most political handicappers expect Democrats to retain their grip on the governorship and other statewide offices this year, in part because of California's pronounced Democratic tilt. GOP registration has dwindled to 28.7 percent.

But sketchy turnout could affect two dozen or more competitive congressional and state legislative contests.

On Friday, party Chairman John Burton warned hundreds of delegates that "we cannot be complacent."

"It's tough to be enthusiastic when you think you have a cinch," he said.

A string of speakers warned that it was critical for Democrats to go the polls this year.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi said Democratic leadership in Washington was responsible for national health care reform and an improving economy. But "these achievements are what Republicans want to reverse," she said.

The convention also provided a snapshot of some of the party's emerging leaders. State Attorney General Kamala Harris, who's up for re-election and has been mentioned as a future candidate for higher office, warned that voter rights, reproductive rights and collective bargaining remain under threat across the country.

Echoing the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., she said "the march goes on today, the march for justice, the march for freedom."

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