



Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy

# CAUSE

*regional power in action*

## 2018 Community Report

2021 Sperry Ave. #9, Ventura, CA 93003  
(805) 658-0810 [causenow.org](http://causenow.org)

### A Message from Board President Dr. Gaye Johnson



In 2018, here in our local community and across the country, we demonstrated the power of our movements for social, economic, and environmental justice.

We moved from resistance and defending against political assaults on our communities to showing our resilience and strength through historic victories that are shaping the future of our region.

In 2018 we celebrated the defeat of the Puente Power Plant in Oxnard and developed the new Ventura County Farmworker Resource Program. We held historic first-ever district elections in Santa Maria, Oxnard, and Ventura for more diverse and equitable representation. We raised over \$2 million in disaster relief for immigrant workers and families impacted by the Thomas Fire and Montecito Mudslides. We advanced campaigns to protect low-income tenants from displacement, ensure the health and safety of farmworkers, and invest in positive opportunities for local youth.

I'm honored to celebrate these victories with you. Thank you to the countless people in 2018 who volunteered their time, donated resources, and supported our campaigns. These historic successes in the movement for justice in our community would not have been possible without your support.



*Rallying at the ICE facility in Santa Maria to protest the separation and detention of immigrant families*



*Registering new voters at Oxnard College*



*The opening of Kellogg Park on Ventura's Westside*



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# Justice for Central Coast Farmworkers

Thanks to years of farmworker organizing, policy advocacy, and stakeholder dialogue led by CAUSE and our partner MICOP, in October the Ventura County Board of Supervisors approved the implementation of a Farmworker Resource Program that will help local farmworkers learn about their rights, file claims with labor protection agencies, and resolve disputes directly with their employers. The program will provide an easily accessible one-stop center to assist local farmworkers with labor issues, housed under the county's Human Services Agency, with both Spanish and indigenous Mixteco language capacity, and is expected to open in spring of 2019.

Meanwhile, CAUSE is partnering with the Santa Barbara County

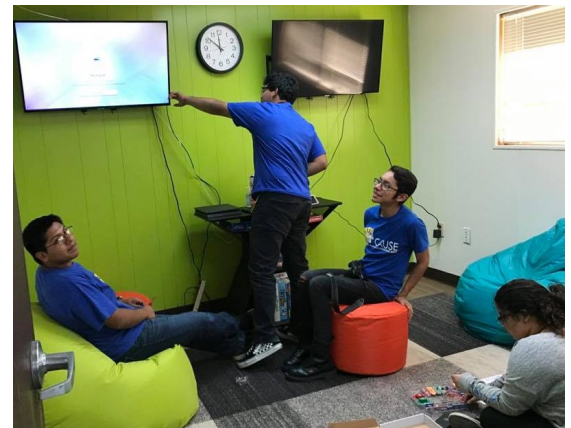
Department of Public Health to develop a program to inspect agricultural fields for access to clean drinking water and field toilets to improve both worker and public health. Improving working conditions in the fields of the Central Coast is particularly critical as the local agriculture industry is struggling to attract and retain local farmworkers. However, many Central Coast employers are turning to the H2A temporary farmworker visa program, a modern evolution of the old Bracero program, which was notorious for abuse and poor conditions. The use of the H2A program has exploded over tenfold in California in recent years and more H2A workers now live in Santa Maria than anywhere else in the state. CAUSE is drawing attention to the risks of returning to the era of migrant farm labor camps and advocating for fair labor and housing conditions for H2A workers.



# Investing in Santa Paula Youth

CAUSE youth achieved a major victory in their years-long effort to expand access to positive opportunities for young people in Santa Paula. When the city began planning a 2016 sales tax measure, CAUSE and our partner Latino Town Hall advocated for funding to go towards not just more law enforcement, but more programs and services for youth. Thanks to the voice of our youth leaders, the city allocated over \$500,000 a year for youth programs, a historic investment in this small community. CAUSE youth then worked to make sure local young people had a say in what types of programs they wanted to see in their community, organizing

a Youth Town Hall, surveying hundreds of local students, and starting a city Youth Council. Based on this engagement, CAUSE leaders developed a proposal for a drop-in teen center that would combine recreational activities, internship opportunities, and mental health services. The city opened this center in January of 2019!



# Fighting for Our Homes in Santa Barbara

CAUSE leaders in Santa Barbara have been working to stop the displacement of the city's working-class immigrant



communities. Corporate landlords have been buying up buildings on the city's Eastside and Westside, kicking out families and driving up rents, fueling a dramatic 24% decline in the city's Latino population since 2011. In 2018, CAUSE organized the tenants of the Eastside's Voluntario Apartments, who have been fighting against a massive rent increase and unlivable conditions from predatory real estate buyers Empire USA. We are continuing to advance our campaign for a Just Cause eviction ordinance to ban unfair and discriminatory evictions so that no family has to live in fear of suddenly losing their home. We are also working to require at least 15% of new housing built be affordable for low and moderate income families to address the city's severe shortage of housing affordable for the local workforce.

# *Environmental Justice in Oxnard and Beyond*

After four years of fighting the proposed Puente power plant, with thousands of Oxnard residents and countless community organizations involved, we declared victory in 2018 as NRG dropped its plans to build the project and began the process of closing down their existing power plants in Oxnard. Southern California Edison is developing solar power, battery storage, and other clean alternatives to power our region instead. Now, Oxnard residents are taking on a new environmental justice challenge: the planned expansion of the Port of Hueneme into South Oxnard over the next few years, which would dramatically increase the volume of cargo shipped into the city and driven out on polluting diesel trucks, and further expand the wall of heavy industry separating South Oxnard from the coast. CAUSE also took on new leadership in statewide environmental policy, helping state agencies develop plans for addressing the unique impacts of climate change, wildfire, and flooding on low-income and immigrant communities, and provide more equitable access to a healthy coastal environment for all Californians.



## *Disaster Aid for Immigrant Families*

After the Thomas Fire and resulting mudslides that devastated our community, thousands of immigrant families were impacted, through lost homes, evacuation costs, and health impacts, but most of all as workers. From farmworkers on the Oxnard Plain to housekeepers in Montecito, countless immigrant families lost work but were shut out of federal assistance due to their immigration status. Many struggled to make ends meet with nowhere to turn for help. CAUSE worked with our partners FLA and MICOP to start the 805 Undocufund, which raised over \$2 million, assisting over 1,400 local affected immigrant families. As 2018 came to a close, the Woolsey Fire hit Ventura County, prompting us to reopen the 805 Undocufund. With wildfires becoming more severe and frequent across the state, CAUSE is calling for a systemic policy solution from Sacramento to ensure immigrant families are not left behind by wildfire relief efforts.



## *Central Coast Immigrant Rights Coalition*

CAUSE continued our work to build the Central Coast Immigrant Rights Coalition (CCIRC) as a hub for organizations and activists working to defend immigrant rights in the Central Coast. We fiscally sponsored and helped fundraise for the Immigrant Legal Defense Center, which is providing free legal assistance to local immigrants facing deportation. We helped grassroots activists in Camarillo, Thousand Oaks and Simi Valley fight anti-immigrant attacks on California's sanctuary policies. And when ICE began separating and detaining families at the border, we helped organize actions throughout the region. Together we brought over 80 local immigrants and allies to the state capitol to lobby their representatives for immigrant inclusion in accessing healthcare, starting businesses, and earning tax credits in California. Our text alert system sent out dozens of warnings about confirmed immigration raids and new ICE tactics, dispelled false rumors, and shared Know Your Rights information and citizenship fairs with thousands of local families. And we mobilized community members to speak at public hearings on the collaboration between the sheriff's office and ICE in both Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties.



# 2018 Organizing and Advocacy Highlights



## Opening of Kellogg Park on Ventura's Westside

Since 2011, Westside Ventura residents organized to get the city to build Kellogg Park to expand fair access to parks and green space. This year, Kellogg Park had its grand opening and is now full of neighborhood families who worked hard to build a healthier community.

## Voting Rights and Representation through District Elections

Throughout our region, CAUSE has engaged hundreds of residents to advocate for district elections to give an equal voice to underrepresented neighborhoods. In November 2018, the cities of Santa Maria, Ventura and Oxnard all held their first district elections, creating more diverse, equitable, and grassroots representation throughout our region.

## Local Youth Speak Out on Gun Violence

Inspired by the youth movement sweeping the country, CAUSE youth spoke out about gun violence in their communities. Youth leaders in Oxnard helped protest the NRA fundraiser held at the Oxnard Marriott, while Santa Maria youth called for a buffer zone to address the gun store directly across the street from Santa Maria High School.



## Including our Voices in Planning Santa Maria's Future

Santa Maria is updating its General Plan for the first time in nearly 30 years, to set a vision for the future of housing, transportation, environmental conservation, and economic development in the city. CAUSE engaged over 200 people through surveys, community forums and meetings with city officials to share their vision for Santa Maria.

## A Vision for Reinvesting in our Schools and Communities

Since the 1970's, California has disinvested public funding in education and critical services like healthcare and housing. CAUSE collected over 1,400 signatures to help qualify a historic proposition for the 2020 ballot that would close a property tax loophole used by the state's wealthiest corporate landowners, to restore \$11 billion a year to our schools and local services.



## A Year-Round Homeless Shelter in Ventura

CAUSE allies and youth leaders mobilized to Ventura City Council to oppose the scapegoating of homeless people after a tragic killing by a mentally ill homeless man and push instead for investment in Ventura County's first year-round public shelter. The city approved \$600k for a shelter location, which is scheduled to open in 2019.



## Standing Up to Big Oil in Santa Maria

Oil companies are proposing to redevelop the Cat Canyon Oilfield outside Santa Maria with over 750 new wells, threatening the groundwater our community depends on for drinking water and agriculture. CAUSE leaders are meeting with county policymakers and speaking out at hearings and forums to protect our health.