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PROGRESSIVES VS. MINORITIES

A little told story is how minorities in California are helping moderate the most destructive impulses of the Democratic Party's progressive wing. Just consider how Hispanic and black Democratic legislators Thursday banded together with Republicans to kill fracking and plastic bag bans.

Of the three fracking moratoriums that Democratic lawmakers introduced this session, only one made it to the Assembly floor for a vote. The moratorium received merely 24 votes. It needed 41 to pass. Since Democrats hold 54 of the Assembly's 80 seats, the ban failed solely because its coastal Democratic supporters couldn't sell it to their peers representing inland regions—many of whom are Hispanics from the Central Valley which overlays the Monterey Shale deposit. Some Democratic legislators even held hearings to explore the economic benefits of fracking. Also noteworthy is that the bill failed despite a resolution that the California Democratic Party passed at its April convention.

Meanwhile, the state Senate shot down a plastic bag ban favored by environmentalists. San Francisco and more than a dozen other coastal cities already disallow plastic bags and require stores to charge customers for paper ones. Only 18 of 27 Democratic senators voted for the ban. It needed at least 21 to pass. Leading the opposition were Hispanic and black Democrats representing economically depressed inland and urban areas.

"This bill is an attack on low economic areas," noted Sen. Ron Calderon of Montebello (located in the Southland's San Gabriel Valley). "It's an attack on minority-owned small business."

"If you think plastic bags are single use, you haven't met my mother," added Sen. Ricardo Lara of Los Angeles. Plastic bag manufacturers are concentrated in Los Angeles's fringes, which have been devastated by the state's green policies.

Democrats hold a supermajority in both legislative chambers and control all statewide offices. However, it may be some small consolation to Republicans (and voters) that the Democratic Party still has some internal checks.

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