

# SOLVING THE CLIMATE CRISIS

*The Congressional Action Plan for a Clean Energy Economy and a Healthy, Resilient, and Just America*



## Environmental Injustice in the United States

In the United States, environmental justice communities are living with the effects of decades of inadequate public and private investment and the legacy of policy choices rooted in racism. Communities of color, low-income communities, and tribal and Indigenous communities are disproportionately burdened and harmed by cumulative exposure to air and water pollution. These communities also are more vulnerable to climate change, which exacerbates existing social and economic inequalities that make it harder to prepare for and recover from extreme weather, from heat waves in neighborhoods without shade to flooding in towns without the means to evacuate.



## INVEST IN DISPROPORTIONATELY EXPOSED COMMUNITIES TO CUT POLLUTION AND ADVANCE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Equitable and just climate policy must do more than cut carbon pollution—it must tackle the legacy of environmental racism and build a clean energy economy that achieves tangible improvements in people's lives. Federal policymakers must develop and implement climate solutions in a way that meaningfully involves and values the experience and ideas of environmental justice (EJ) communities.

### CONGRESS SHOULD:

#### Make Environmental Justice a Cornerstone of Climate and Environmental Policy

**Direct Congress and federal agencies to consult EJ communities** early and often when drafting policies that would affect their health and livelihoods.

**Strengthen enforcement** of cornerstone environmental laws in EJ communities.

**Empower EJ communities** by creating a private right of action under the Civil Rights Act for disparate pollution impacts.

**Direct the EPA to consider cumulative pollution impacts** in its implementation of environmental laws.

**Ensure meaningful engagement** with EJ communities by strengthening public consultation under the National Environmental Policy Act.

**Build the capacity of organizations and communities** working toward environmental justice through grantmaking, training, and technical assistance.

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## Ensure Climate Goals and Policy Solutions Achieve Environmental Justice

**Direct the National Academies of Sciences to assess the disparate impacts of federal climate policies on EJ communities**, including cumulative pollution impacts.

**Direct states to assess communities' needs** and distribute grant funds for clean energy, energy efficiency, and pollution reduction projects according to those needs.

## Support Energy Democracy and Energy Efficiency in Low-Income Communities

**Establish an Energy Justice and Democracy program** at the Department of Energy to reduce energy poverty, ensure EJ communities have equitable access to energy efficiency and renewable energy, support community energy planning, and promote climate resilience in vulnerable communities.

**Expand community solar projects** by providing loans and grants to state, local, and tribal governments, and other organizations.

**Increase funding for low-income energy assistance** and improve access to residential solar energy for low-income families.

**Increase funding for the Weatherization Assistance Program** to weatherize every eligible home in America and address underlying health and safety issues in homes.

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**Increase federal funding to retrofit and decarbonize all public housing**; increase tax credits and efficiency incentives for affordable housing.

## Reduce Pollution from Industrial Facilities

**Reduce the threat of toxic releases in storms from polluted sites in EJ communities** and increase funding to clean up and reuse contaminated properties.

**Reduce pollution from industrial facilities** by setting enforceable performance standards; require EPA to assess the distributional impacts of the standards, especially in EJ communities most harmed by past pollution.

## Ensure Mandatory Emissions Reductions with Any Carbon Price

**Put a price on carbon** as one tool in the climate toolbox but pair a carbon price with policies to achieve **measurable air pollution reductions** from facilities located in EJ communities.



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## Strengthen EJ Communities' Resilience to Climate Impacts

**Support community leadership in climate resilience and equity by prioritizing technical assistance and grant funds in EJ communities** that are experiencing disproportionate impacts of extreme weather and disasters to build local capacities, harness local workforce capabilities, and strengthen housing, public buildings, and infrastructure.

**Ensure access to affordable housing and flood insurance** by dedicating funds to affordable construction and retrofits of homes, providing assistance to households facing rising housing costs due to climate impacts, and providing means-tested assistance to those facing hardship due to increasing flood risk and insurance costs.

**Accelerate disaster recovery in EJ communities** by permanently authorizing community development and disaster recovery programs, leveraging affordable insurance for rapid payments, and ensuring the equitable treatment of low-moderate income households seeking relocation assistance.

**Reduce climate-related health burdens** for frontline communities by investing in resilient hospital infrastructure and funding Centers for Disease Control programs to address environmental conditions leading to health disparities in EJ communities.

## Ensure Equal Access to Green Spaces and Healthy Food Systems

**Share nature's benefits more evenly and inclusively** by developing and funding initiatives to ensure equitable access to parks, public lands, and other natural spaces.

**Improve local food systems** and access to healthy, fresh, and culturally appropriate foods.

**Support socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers** to build an equitable and just climate-friendly food system.

