



Policy Fact Sheet: Environmental Justice for All

Policy Name: A. Donald McEachin Environmental Justice for All Act

Assigned Number: No bill numbers as of April 18, 2023

Sponsors/Cosponsors: Sen. Booker (D-N.J.), Sen. Duckworth (D-IL), Rep. Grijalva (D-AZ-07), and Rep. Lee (D-CA-12)

The A. Donald McEachin Environmental Justice for All Act is a bill that would require new policies to safeguard low-income and/or BIPOC communities from pollution and require that implementation of existing policies does not negatively impact these communities.



Environmental injustice is a persistent and pervasive issue in the United States. While climate change and environmental issues affect everyone, they affect some communities disproportionately.

BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) communities and/or low-income communities often live in locations more subject to factory pollution, poor air and water quality, and lessened access to nature. These communities experience the greatest impacts of environmental injustice, even though they have contributed the least to climate change and environmental degradation.¹

We, as Christians, are called to care for God's planet and people. We need to pay attention and do what we can to help mitigate the suffering of our communities and neighbors.

As this situation affects millions of people across the country, Jesus said in Matthew 25 to care for the least of these. We need to speak truth to power to support those unjustly affected by environmental injustice.

What is the Environmental Justice for All Act?

The Environmental Justice for All Act seeks to comprehensively achieve environmental justice, health equity, and climate justice for all under-resourced communities. The legislation is rooted in the moral principle that all people have the right to pure air, clean water, and an environment that enriches life, and that federal policy should be responsive to that principle.

The bill plans to address the disproportionate impact on communities experiencing environmental justice by:

- Strengthening the Civil Rights Act of 1974 by prohibiting disparate impact discrimination and allowing residents and organizations to seek legal remedies when exposed to disparate² impact of environmental injustice.
- Requiring federal agencies to withhold permits on projects that will knowingly cause harm to human health.
- Directing federal agencies to develop environmental justice strategies and regularly report on the implementation and progress.
- Requiring federal agencies to engage communities in opportunities under NEPA,³ including representation of Indigenous tribes in the planning and decision-making process.
- Increasing access to parks and recreational opportunities, especially for urban communities that are often under-resourced.

Past environmental policy and legislation has benefited communities who do not experience systemic discrimination, often at the expense of low-income and/or BIPOC communities. Improving the environment and access to the outdoors for frontline communities of environmental justice will benefit everyone.

Endnotes

1. World Bank. Social Dimensions of Climate Change. World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/social-dimensions-of-climate-change>
2. Disparate impact refers to the unintentional discrimination that occurs when policies, practices, rules or other systems that appear to be neutral result in a disproportionate impact on a protected group. This definition comes from the SHRM Executive Network.
3. NEPA (National Environmental Protection Act) was signed into law in 1970 requiring federal agencies to assess the environmental effects of their proposed actions prior to making decisions. You can read more about NEPA here.

Take Action

Support the Environmental Justice for All Act by taking these steps:

- Email your members of Congress by using this [form](#).
- Call your member of Congress. Use the script below as a guide to call your members of Congress. Look up their office phone numbers at www.house.gov.

Sample Call Script

Good morning/afternoon.

I am a constituent of the representative/senator. As a Christian, I am encouraged and excited to see the A. Donald McEachin Environmental Justice for All Act on the docket for the House/Senate. Every one of God's people needs to be cared for and protected. This bill addresses multiple points of concern for all of us, but it addresses the needs of communities most impacted by environmental injustice the most. I am calling to encourage you to support the A. Donald McEachin Environmental Justice for All Act.