

New Report November 4, 2025

Greenlight to Pollute in Texas:

Proposed Buildout of Petrochemical Facilities Targets Most Vulnerable Communities, Again



Our *Green Light to Pollute Texas* report from the Bullard Center at Texas Southern University examines the proposed buildout of 89 new or expanding petrochemical facilities across five regions in Texas (Port Arthur/Beaumont, Greater Houston, the Coastal Bend, the Southern Coast, and Inland Texas).

Statewide

- The findings indicate that 9 of 10 proposed facilities are in fenceline communities where residents already experience higher environmental and health risks from industrial pollution compared with the national average.
- New petrochemical facilities are proposed for 22 counties in Texas, where 20 (90%) of the counties' percent people of color or poverty rates are above the state or national rates.
- 92% of the petrochemical projects are planned in communities where residents already experience higher environmental health risks from industrial pollution than the national average placing fenceline communities at elevated environmental, economic and health risk.

Air Pollution

- 78% of the proposed facilities are in communities where PM2.5 is worse than the national average and 84% of facilities are planned in communities where toxic air releases are worse than the national average.

Proximity to Polluters

The proposed petrochemical facilities show a clear pattern of clustering near other polluting industries, especially in the Houston area along the Houston Ship Channel.

- 83% of facilities of the proposed facilities ranked above the national average for locating near other high-risk facilities covered by federal Risk Management Plans (RMP).
- Texas 1,558 RMP facilities, the largest number of any state in the country
- Texas also has the largest number of reported chemical incidents, emergencies that disproportionately impact Latino communities. There have been 164 chemical incidents in the U.S. in 2025 so far. Texas had 31 incidents in 2024 and 22 incidents in 2025 so far.
- These chemical emergencies adversely affect nearby residents in a variety of ways, including road closures, shelter in place orders, emergency room visits, and increased cancer risks.

Social Vulnerability and Demographic Indexes

- Over half (56%) of the proposed facilities are in communities with a **Supplemental Demographic Index** (measuring vulnerability such as low income, education, and life expectancy, disability, and limited English language) greater than the national average.
- Nearly two-thirds (64%) of the facilities are slated for communities with a **Demographic Index** (low income and race) that was greater than the national average.



Social Vulnerability and Demographic Indexes (continued)

The proposed petrochemical buildout in Texas continues to target communities where both race and poverty intersect to create compounded risk:

- 93% of fenceline communities have a higher percentage of people living below the federal poverty line.
- 91% of fenceline communities exceed the Texas poverty rate.
- 93% of fenceline communities exceed the national average for people of color.
- 84% of fenceline communities exceed the state average for people of color.

Black and Latino residents who live fenceline to petrochemical plants bear a disproportionate pollution burden, the flares, the truck traffic, and the chemical fires, but seldom reap the benefits. They are promised good jobs and economic benefits, but rarely see it come to fruition. Port Arthur, TX is a poster child example of this false-promise scenario.

- Port Arthur is home to the nation's largest refinery Motiva and a host of other fossil fuels and petrochemical plants.
- 18 new sites are proposed for Port Arthur where 83% of its residents are people of color and nearly 28% live in poverty, and where neighborhoods are near clusters of fossil fuel plants.

Houston, TX is home to the World's largest Medical Center with over 103,000 employees. Houston is also home to the largest petrochemical industrial complex in the nation, the Houston Ship Channel, a 52-mile waterway that runs from the Gulf of Mexico to Houston. The Ship Channel is lined with over 600 industrial plants that generate more than 44% of the nation's petrochemical production.

- The Houston area is at the epicenter of a rapidly expanding petrochemical industry with 22 petrochemical facilities and expansions, the largest concentration of proposed developments, planned for Harris County in the next few years.

- All **22** proposed facilities are located in fenceline communities where poverty, percent people of color and pollution exceed the national average and state average.

Why does this matter now? It matters because the federal environmental protection and regulatory landscape shifted dramatically under the Second Trump Administration.

- Using rapid-fire executive orders and directives, the administration tilted federal policies in favor of fossil fuels and petrochemical manufacturing that provide less protection, less federal regulatory oversight, less chemical safety and investigations, less pollution monitoring, less environmental and health impact assessment, less science-based decision-making, and less clean energy.
- This shift also directed more fast-tracking and streamlining permitting, more fossil fuels and petrochemical facility siting, more exemptions, and sadly more licenses to pollute more.
- Nowhere are the shifting environmental protection dynamics clearer than in Texas, where the proposed petrochemical buildout has concentrated in already vulnerable, overburdened and economically marginalized communities.

Fenceline communities, long neglected and over polluted, are calling on all levels of government to halt these new petrochemical buildout will add to the toxic load of residents in already overburdened communities.

- The hard-working Texas taxpayers in communities where these petrochemical plants are being proposed deserve better.
- They are calling for the government to provide equal protection as guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution—and not allow their communities to continue to serve as environmental “sacrifice zones” and dumping grounds for petrochemicals and plastics production.

