Date: October 2025

National People's Policy Priorities for Environmental Justice

A Report for the People's Environmental Justice Advisory Council

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Introduction

Purpose

The National People's Policy Priorities for Environmental Justice was developed as an initial framework to support the goals of the People's Environmental Justice Advisory Council (PEJAC) by elevating high-level environmental justice (EJ) priorities and recommendations to the national stage. Grounded in the lived experiences of frontline communities, the priorities outlined here emerged from a synthesis of personal testimonies shared by local EJ leaders, organizers, and residents during the two regional People's Hearings; the first held in Greensboro, North Carolina (NC) on June 10–11, 2025 and the second held on September 4-5, 2025, in Tucson, Arizona (AZ). It also includes information on past, existing, and proposed federal policies, programs, and regulations that could be developed, enhanced, or revised to advance environmental justice priorities. These proposed priorities and policy recommendations represent a starting point for PEJAC members to review, debate, refine, and evolve as additional input is gathered. They provide a preliminary model for shaping national policy, funding, and organizing efforts that align with EJ principles and the goals of EJ communities.[1]

As additional People's Hearings are held in the coming year, this proposed framework will continue to grow, incorporating new perspectives and policy solutions informed by the organizing and lived experiences of EJ groups across different regions.

Methods and Limitations

The eleven priority areas presented in this document were developed through a classification and thematic analysis of the individual testimonies taken from the NC and AZ People's Hearings. In NC, these testimonies were recorded and synthesized by notetakers from the Tishman Center, the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network (NCEJN), and volunteers coming from Michigan. In Arizona, which brought in participants from other states in the southwest region (Nevada and New Mexico), notetakers also included Tishman Center staff and volunteers from the Indigenous Resilience Center at the University of Arizona. Through a collaborative, iterative coding and review process, the Tishman Center's research team organized recurring EJ issues, demands, and proposed solutions into overarching thematic "buckets" that reflect the concerns and priorities voiced by participants. Subsequently, additional secondary research was conducted on past, existing, and proposed federal policies, programs, and regulations that could be developed, enhanced, or revised to advance these environmental justice priorities. This methodology centers lived experience as a core data source and affirms grassroots leadership in shaping a national EJ agenda grounded in justice and equity.

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[1] For the purposes of this framework, "EJ Community" refers to a geographically or culturally distinct community that is predominantly composed of people of color and/or low-income households, who live at the direct intersection of environmental hazards and socio-economic vulnerability. EJ communities experience disproportionate exposure to pollution, are at the frontlines of climate impacts, and other environmental harms, while often having limited influence in environmental decision-making.

Priorities Framework Summary Table

Priority	Description	Policy Solutions	Policy Issues
Air Quality	Protects public health by reducing exposure to hazardous air pollutants in communities dealing with multiple stressors. Centers solutions on the reduction of cumulative impacts, neighborhood hot spots, and meaningful community participation in monitoring, corporate accountability, and regulatory enforcement.	• Enhance national ambient air quality and air toxics standards to reflect cumulative burdens/risk and close industrial loopholes. • Expand and integrate community-led air monitoring for environmental justice. • Regulate and control air pollution from high-consumption infrastructure, such as energy-intensive data centers. • Strengthen air permitting processes and standards to prevent disproportionate harms for environmental justice communities.	Air Pollution; Industrial Siting; Local Testing And Monitoring; Industrial Regulatory Loopholes; Air Permitting
Climate Resilience and Adaptation	Centers community-based responses to climate impacts, including heat, storms, fires, and flooding, prioritizing infrastructure, housing, and funding that build long-term safety and well-being.	• Fund community-led climate resilience and disaster preparedness. • Strengthen emergency planning and public accountability. • Ensure equitable post-disaster recovery and infrastructure rebuilding. • Incentivize state and local climate resilience plans. • Establish extreme heat protections for vulnerable populations and worker safety.	Disaster Management; Housing Protections; Extreme Heat Issues; Flooding
Community Health and Safety	Links environmental justice to public and occupational health, demanding healthcare to address health conditions, chronic disease clusters, underserved areas, and unsafe labor conditions rooted in racial and economic inequality, as well as exposure mitigation through emergency planning and improved communication (including notice requirements) for hazardous releases and other adverse events.	• Mandate transparent and proactive public notification of hazardous environmental exposures. • Expand healthcare access for underserved and overburdened communities. • Codify legally enforceable workplace protections against environmental and occupational exposures. • Reduce risks to communities from leaks, spills, and explosions at chemical plants and other hazardous infrastructure.	Cancer Clusters; Asthma Zones; Avian Flu Risk in Poultry Workers; Lack of Rural Health Services; Occupational Safety
Community Power and Civic Engagement	Strengthens procedural justice by ensuring frontline communities have meaningful roles in decisions, enforcement, and oversight.	• Institutionalize community advisory boards in federally funded projects. • Support participatory budgeting and community control of public funds. • Enforce moratorium requirements and prior notification for hazardous projects. • Advance data justice and community access to environmental information.	Voting Rights; Participatory Planning; Intergenerational Engagement & Learning; Community Advisory Boards; Data Access
Economic Justice and Funding	Calls for redirecting public and private climate investments toward the benefit of frontline	• Protect and expand pathways for community ownership of land, housing, and enterprises.	Community-Owned; Direct Funding; Participatory

National People's Policy Priorities for Environmental Justice

Priority	Description	Policy Solutions	Policy Issues
	communities. Emphasizes community ownership, good jobs, and equitable access to resources.	• Direct federal investments to community-led economic development and climate solutions. • Reform federal property valuation and advocate for protective tax policies and relief tools to support low-wealth communities.	Budgeting; Green Jobs
Equitable Infrastructure and Land Use	Opposes harmful zoning practices and the development of major infrastructure, such as highways, pipelines, and goods movement hubs, near fenceline communities, and calls for community-driven, equitable planning, green infrastructure, and land-use reform.	• Tie federal infrastructure funding to inclusive and equitable land use practices. • Enforce civil rights and environmental justice compliance in land use policy. • Expand support for public and community ownership and cooperative infrastructure models. • Increase federal oversight with cumulative impacts siting requirements for all technology infrastructure.	Transportation Equity; Climate-Adaptive Design; Anti-Displacement Policies; Land Loss Prevention; Zoning; Data Centers
Just and Renewable Energy Systems	Focuses on democratizing energy access, opposes fossil fuel and other extractive infrastructure (such as methane pipelines and mega gas stations), promotes public and community-owned renewables, especially decentralized and distributed alternatives such as rooftop solar and battery energy storage, heat pumps, among other options, and resists climate policies that produce harmful community, environmental, and health impacts.	• Expand funding for energy conservation, efficiency, and literacy programs, public and community-owned decentralized/distributed renewable energy projects. • Mandate inclusive energy governance in federal clean energy programs. • Develop federal definitions and guidance for equitable energy transition. • Invest in renewable energy workforce training in environmental justice communities. • Establish energy efficiency standards for data centers and prevent energy cost shifting to consumers.	Decentralized/distributed Renewable Energy; Energy Affordability; Biogas; Energy Democracy; Wood Pellets; Methane Pipelines; Utility Justice
Land Stewardship and Self-Determination	Affirms the right of Indigenous peoples and communities of color to control and care for land. Prioritizes decolonized land practices and environmental governance.	• Support and institutionalize Indigenous and Black land stewardship practices. • Invest in youth-led and intergenerational cultural and land-based programs. • Return and rematriate land to Indigenous peoples and tribes. • Uphold free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) and community self-determination.	Indigenous Sovereignty; Land Back; Community Land Trusts; Black Farmers/Land Restoration; Cultural Land Practices; Consent; Public and Sacred Land
Legacy Pollution and Cumulative Impacts	Addresses generations of environmental racism and pollution burden, calling for full cleanups, remediation, restoration, and reparative policies, as well as the incorporation of protections against cumulative impacts into permitting frameworks.	• Remediate contaminated land and water with community leadership. • Require denials of environmental permits in certain conditions based on cumulative impacts (CI). • Enforce accountability for industrial polluters.	Superfund Sites; Coal Ash; PFAS; Legacy Waste; Brownfields; Cumulative Impacts; Landfills; Mining

National People's Policy Priorities for Environmental Justice

Priority	Description	Policy Solutions	Policy Issues
		• Reform mining laws and strengthen environmental safeguards for extractive industries.	
Sustainable Agriculture and Food Justice	Addresses the harms of industrial agriculture (i.e., CAFOs) on land, water, workers, and communities, especially for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant, and low-wealth communities, while advancing agroecological and just food systems.	• Eliminate regulatory loopholes for industrial food animal production. • Fund community-led research on industrial agriculture impacts. • Strengthen federal labor standards for farmworkers. • Support regenerative and Indigenous agriculture through farm bill programs and federal food access and nutrition programs.	CAFOs; Pesticide Exposure; Biogas From Manure; Food Apartheid; Indigenous and Black Land Sovereignty
Water Quality & Access	Ensures clean, affordable water and sanitation as a fundamental right. Prioritizes infrastructure investment, strict enforcement, and source-water protections in communities burdened by industrial discharges, legacy contamination, failing systems, and scarcity.	• Strengthen water quality standards to reflect co-occurring burdens and risk. • Expand and integrate community-led water monitoring for environmental justice. • Fund and enforce equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation. • Close loopholes that exempt polluting facilities from environmental regulation in the Clean Water Act. • Regulate and ensure accountability and transparency for the water usage of high-consumption infrastructure.	Water Access & Affordability; Industrial Runoff (PFAS); Local Testing And Monitoring; Water Consumption & Scarcity

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Air Quality

Priority Description

Protects public health by reducing exposure to hazardous air pollutants in communities dealing with multiple stressors. Centers solutions on the reduction of cumulative impacts, neighborhood hot spots, and meaningful community participation in monitoring, corporate accountability, and regulatory enforcement.

Policy Solutions

1. **Enhance national ambient air quality and air toxics standards to reflect cumulative burdens/risk and close industrial loopholes.**

   The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), under the Clean Air Act (CAA), the Toxic Substances Control Act, and other relevant environmental statutes, should update national air quality standards and regulations on hazardous air pollutants (HAPs) to ensure they adequately protect communities experiencing multiple and overlapping environmental and health burdens. Standards should be based on the latest science, with a precautionary approach to setting air pollutant thresholds. Regulatory processes must prioritize the prevention of harm, recognizing that people and communities are not affected by a single pollutant at a time in isolation, but rather by co-occurring, or cumulative, hazards, multiple exposures via different pathways, and other factors of susceptibility and vulnerability that can magnify the harm they experience. Congress must also amend and end exemptions for specific industrial and agricultural facilities, such as CAFOs, from key provisions of the CAA. These facilities must be subject to the same permitting, emissions disclosure, and public notification standards as other regulated sectors.

2. **Expand and integrate community-led air monitoring for environmental justice.**

   The federal government should increase funding for citizen science and community-based air quality monitoring through the EPA's small block grants programs, regional monitoring programs, and partnerships with universities, tribal entities, and community-based organizations. Resources should support low-cost sensor networks, public data platforms, and technical capacity building in frontline communities near highways, ports, refineries, industrial facilities, and other significant sources of pollution. Routine, standardized testing for hazardous pollutants, such as fine particulate matter (PM2.5), diesel particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide (NO_2), ozone (O_3), and toxic air releases must be conducted in EJ-designated areas, schools, public housing, and high-risk zones. These efforts should be carried out by independent entities, with data formally integrated into EPA enforcement actions and permitting decisions. The EPA and CDC should also collaborate to develop a publicly accessible national dashboard that tracks air and water quality, as well as cumulative health risks, by census tract.

3. **Regulate and control air pollution from high-consumption infrastructure, such as energy-intensive data centers.**

   The rapid expansion of high-consumption infrastructure, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) **data centers,** poses serious risks to air and water resources, especially in drought-prone and energy-stressed regions. Projects like *Project Blue* in Arizona have highlighted how large-scale developments are often approved without full public disclosure of their **water and energy consumption, air pollution, and community impacts**, and without meaningful consultation with **local communities**. Additionally, many loopholes exist preventing full accountability and oversight. For example, data-center backup generator units labeled as "emergency" units have lighter regulatory oversight and often use diesel fuel with higher emissions, with no federal requirement to switch to cleaner backup generators. There is an urgent need to create a regulatory framework to prevent harm from data center development and operation, including compromised air quality and water access.

   With respect to air quality, the EPA, under CAA and related authorities, should close emergency-engine loopholes and tighten oversight: (1) Enforce Reciprocating Internal Combustion Engine (RICE) National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) and New Source Performance Standards (NSPS) on backup generators; require ultra-low-sulfur fuel and particulate controls; reclassify frequently run units as non-emergency and cap non-emergency hours; (2) require neighborhood-scale cumulative hot-spot analysis for siting/expansions

triggering enforceable actions before approval and during commissioning, load tests, and outages; and (3) adopt construction/logistics controls, such as anti-idling, dust suppression and covered loads, and designated truck routes with buffers from homes and schools.

4. **Strengthen air permitting processes and standards to prevent disproportionate harms for environmental justice communities.**

   Federal agencies, such as the EPA, DOE, and DOT, should require all federally authorized permitting programs to apply a consistent and thorough environmental justice approach to every permitting action and decision. At a minimum, permitting authorities should follow the EPA's "Principles for Addressing Environmental Justice Concerns in Air Permitting" operating framework, which includes eight guiding principles to address and mitigate air quality impacts in EJ communities. These principles include: (1) identifying affected communities early on using vetted and trusted EJ screening tools; (2) engaging the community before applications are deemed complete; (3) promoting public participation and feedback throughout the permitting process; (4) conducting a fit-for-purpose EJ analysis that identifies adverse human health or environmental effects as well as cumulative burdens, (5) including mitigation and monitoring in the permit terms and conditions (e.g., stricter emission limits, operating-hour caps, cleaner fuels or machinery) using CAA regulatory power and/or state, local or Tribal regulation to deny, condition, or reopen permits where adverse impacts would occur; (6) providing federal support throughout the permitting process; (7) ensuring transparency with complete, accessible administrative records, translation, interpretation, and technical support for affected communities (8) building capacity to enhance environmental justice considerations and concerns between regulatory agencies, stakeholders and communities through training, technical assistance and outreach. In addition, particularly for permit renewals, federal agencies should evaluate an applicant's compliance history, whereby chronic or willful violators of regulatory requirements would be presumptively ineligible for renewal, or renewed only under stricter terms and enforceable conditions (e.g., tighter limits, third-party audits, real-time monitoring, penalty fees, etc).

Climate Resilience And Adaptation

Priority Description

Centers community-based responses to climate impacts, including heat, storms, fires, hurricanes, and flooding, prioritizing infrastructure, housing, and funding that build long-term safety and well-being.

Policy Solutions

1. **Fund community-led climate resilience and disaster preparedness.**

   Provide direct federal grants (via Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Department of Energy (DOE) to support community-led climate resilience initiatives. Funding should prioritize neighborhood-based resilience networks and the creation of resilience hubs that offer services such as cooling centers, emergency power, and food storage in frontline communities.

2. **Strengthen emergency planning and public accountability.**

   Require local emergency planning committees (LEPCs) under the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA) to produce and regularly update community-informed emergency response plans, include representation from vulnerable populations, hold regular public meetings, and submit annual updates. Continued federal funding (e.g., FEMA or Department of Homeland Security (DHS) grants) should be contingent on compliance with these public accountability standards.

3. **Ensure equitable post-disaster recovery and infrastructure rebuilding.**

   Federal recovery programs, such as FEMA's Public and Individual Assistance programs and HUD's Community Development Block Grant for Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR), should be required to prioritize the distribution of renewable energy, including rooftop solar and battery energy storage systems, as well as the rebuilding of essential community infrastructure. Disaster recovery efforts should also prioritize affordable housing, schools, trauma-informed care services, and mental health support, with additional investment in green workforce development linked to recovery efforts.

4. **Incentivize state and local climate resilience plans.**

   Create competitive grants or formula-based funding (through the EPA, DOE, or FEMA) for state and local climate adaptation plans that are community-driven, equity-centered, aligned with updated Justice40 principles, and co-developed with frontline and historically excluded communities.

5. **Establish extreme heat protections for vulnerable populations and worker safety.**

   As climate change worsens, extreme heat events are occurring more often, lasting longer, and getting hotter. Extreme heat events increase health risks, especially in places with poor air quality, among populations suffering from pre-existing health conditions and other socio-environmental stressors, and where energy costs are high and reliable cooling is challenging. Utility shutoffs, inadequate cooling options, and unsafe work conditions both indoors and outdoors compound these risks, making lifeline protections and a strong Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) heat standard critical to ensure health and safety. Federal agencies, such as FEMA, DOE and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), should tie funds to utility no-disconnect protocols during National Weather Service heat alerts and also designate federal clean-air/cooling hubs with backup power in vulnerable areas, such as mobile-home parks and tribal centers.

Community Health And Safety

Priority Description

Links environmental justice to public and occupational health, demanding healthcare to address health conditions, chronic disease clusters, underserved areas, and unsafe labor conditions rooted in racial and economic inequality, as well as exposure mitigation through emergency planning and improved communication (including notice requirements) for hazardous releases and other adverse events.

Policy Solutions

1. **Mandate transparent and proactive public notification of hazardous environmental exposures.**

   Strengthen and enforce public disclosure requirements under existing laws and regulatory frameworks, such as EPCRA and the Toxics Release Inventory (TRI). Require facilities to notify nearby communities of hazardous releases in real time, using clear and accessible formats. EPA should establish national standards for multilingual public alerts and require companies to report not only large releases but also chronic low-level exposures.

2. **Expand healthcare access for underserved and overburdened communities.**

   Federal agencies such as HHS should expand mobile clinics, community health centers, and public health surveillance in areas with high environmental health risks. Federal projects should prioritize funding for rural, tribal, and frontline communities through programs such as the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and incorporate environmental exposure history into federally funded health assessments and services.

3. **Codify legally enforceable workplace protections against environmental and occupational exposures.**

   The Department of Labor (DOL) and OSHA should strengthen and enforce workplace health protections by creating legally binding exposure limits for hazardous chemicals, increasing the frequency of workplace inspections in high-risk industries, and requiring employers to disclose risks to workers. Worker protections must extend to subcontracted and temporary workers, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, waste management, and manufacturing, where exposure risks are particularly high. Additionally, many of OSHA's current permissible exposure limits (PELs) are decades old and do not reflect modern scientific understanding or cumulative exposure risks. OSHA could revise outdated PELs based on up-to-date public health research, establish cumulative exposure standards for workers exposed to multiple hazardous substances, and prioritize updates for industries with high EJ relevance (e.g., agriculture, waste, construction).

4. **Reduce risks to communities from leaks, spills, and explosions at chemical plants and other hazardous infrastructure.**

   The EPA must strengthen and fully implement its Risk Management Program (RMP) rule to better protect communities living near high-risk chemical facilities. The recently finalized "Safer Communities by Chemical Accident Prevention" (2024) under the RMP was a critical step toward this goal, requiring facilities to adopt safer technologies and practices, conduct regular worst-case scenario assessments, and meaningfully engage local communities in emergency preparedness. The rule also mandates greater transparency through the RMP Public Data Tool, real-time hazard communication, and stronger enforcement mechanisms for noncompliance. However, this rule is currently under reconsideration by the Trump administration, putting frontline communities at renewed risk of chemical disasters. Advocates must press for the rule's full enforcement and expansion, and push back against any attempts to weaken or rescind its provisions.

   In addition, the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) within the Department of Transportation (DOT) must be empowered to improve pipeline safety standards, particularly in environmental justice, Indigenous, and rural communities. PHMSA should require comprehensive inspections of aging pipelines, enforce community notification protocols for leaks and incidents, and provide public access to risk maps. Stronger collaboration among EPA, PHMSA, and LEPCs is necessary to ensure timely and coordinated responses to chemical releases, infrastructure failures, and disaster events, particularly as the risk of climate-exacerbated industrial hazards increases. To support these efforts, Congress should advance legislative reforms and funding

for pipeline safety, enabling the DOE and PHMSA to enhance leak detection, retrofit aging pipelines, and mitigate environmental and public health risks. The Next Generation Pipelines Research and Development Act (H.R. 2613) provides one example of how such policy measures could be structured.

Community Power And Civic Engagement

Priority Description

Strengthens procedural justice by ensuring frontline communities have meaningful roles in decisions, enforcement, and oversight.

Policy Solutions

1. **Institutionalize community advisory boards in federally funded projects.**

   Federal agencies, such as the EPA, DOT, HUD, and DOE, should require the creation of Community Advisory Boards (CABs) as a condition for receiving federal infrastructure, environmental, and energy funding in communities that are overburdened. These boards must have decision-making power, be adequately resourced with stipends and technical assistance, and accurately reflect local demographics, including residents most impacted by pollution, disinvestment, or climate-related risks. CABs should be integrated into long-term planning and oversight, rather than relying solely on short-term consultation and feedback.

2. **Support participatory budgeting and community control of public funds.**

   Federal agencies should establish grant programs and incentives for local participatory budgeting (PB) initiatives, especially in communities that have faced systemic disinvestment. These programs should include funding for the infrastructure of civic engagement, such as multilingual outreach, facilitation training, digital tools, and youth engagement. Federal agencies should also ensure that PB processes can influence the allocation of climate, infrastructure, and health-related investments. Federal agencies can pilot PB within their own grantmaking, allowing grantees to co-develop funding priorities with communities.

3. **Enforce moratorium requirements and prior notification for hazardous projects.**

   The federal government should require that any federally funded or permitted hazardous infrastructure projects (e.g., pipelines, waste facilities, polluting industries, data centers) include a moratorium period during which affected communities are formally notified and have opportunities to submit input before permitting decisions are made. Notifications must be multilingual, accessible, and include public hearings. Projects in designated environmental justice areas should be paused or denied if community opposition or cumulative harms are identified.

4. **Advance data justice and community access to environmental information.**

   Recent federal rollbacks of data tools for EJ, such as the removal of the Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping tool (EJSCREEN) from official EPA webpages, have shown how easily critical environmental information can be taken offline and also undermine EJ efforts that rely on federal datasets. To protect against future rollbacks, Congress should amend the Federal Records Act to: (1) define public-facing federal agency webpages and environmental datasets as permanent records by default, and (2) require the National Archives (NARA) to create versioned, public mirrors of webpages, reports, and datasets before any change or removal. Congress should also strengthen the OPEN Government Data Act to enforce a "no-delete without public archive" rule, with persistent and stable identifiers (DOIs/PURLs), open APIs, bulk downloads, and compliance that follows Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-130 guidance.

   The federal government should also center community governance and oversight of environmental and public health data, funding EJ advisory boards, local data stewards, and locally managed monitoring networks whose results are formally used in permitting, enforcement, and health-protection decisions. Federal agencies should ensure transparent, multilingual, and co-designed environmental and public-health data tools, paired with community data training and open-access platforms.

Economic Justice And Funding

Priority Description

Calls for redirecting public and private climate investments toward the benefit of frontline communities. Emphasizes community ownership, good jobs, and equitable access to resources.

Policy Solutions

1. **Protect and expand pathways for community ownership of land, housing, and enterprises.**

   Increase funding and technical assistance for community land trusts, housing cooperatives, local worker-owned enterprises, and other shared-ownership models that allow communities to retain and control the wealth they generate. Federal courts and independent agencies, such as the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) and the National Credit Union Administration, may retain some authority to defend community lending models and public asset ownership. Agencies such as HUD, the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Development, and the Department of Commerce should support these models through grant programs, loan guarantees, and procurement preferences that prioritize vulnerable frontline communities.

2. **Direct federal investments to community-led economic development and climate solutions.**

   With the dismantling of Justice40 and Inflation Reduction Act programs, advocacy must focus on challenging discriminatory or unlawful reallocation of federal funds. Federal infrastructure, climate, and recovery funding should be directed toward community-managed programs in areas such as land and water remediation, climate resilience, and just transition planning. Funding mechanisms should prioritize long-term, flexible, and general operating support to frontline groups, especially in communities that have historically been excluded from federal programs. Civil rights litigation, state Attorneys General, and oversight committees in Congress (where possible) can intervene when communities are excluded from infrastructure or environmental investments. Strategies should include Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, impact documentation, and public exposure of inequitable federal spending patterns.

3. **Reform federal property valuation and advocate for protective tax policies and relief tools to support low-wealth communities.**

   Offer technical support and incentives to states and localities to adopt equity-based property valuation systems, particularly in gentrifying or disinvested areas where assessments often distort actual market conditions. Even without a proactive climate policy, federal tax and housing policy can still be used to shield vulnerable communities from displacement. Advocacy should push for the expansion of federal tax relief mechanisms, like low-income housing tax credits, energy-efficiency rebates, and direct homeowner support. National coalitions should press Congress and the courts to amend the recent regressive tax reforms that exacerbate inequality or encourage land speculation in frontline communities.

Equitable Infrastructure And Land Use

Priority Description

Opposes harmful zoning practices and the development of major infrastructure, such as highways, pipelines, and goods movement hubs, near fenceline communities, and calls for community-driven, equitable planning, green infrastructure, and land-use reform.

Policy Solutions

1. **Tie federal infrastructure funding to inclusive and equitable land use practices.**

   Condition funding for infrastructure and land development projects on demonstrated compliance with equity standards. Federal agencies such as the DOT, HUD, and EPA should require meaningful community engagement in planning, prioritizing projects that reduce racial and spatial disparities, and ensuring that environmental justice communities benefit from federal investments. Projects funded through future legislative packages (such as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)) and other major funding streams should be assessed for equity impacts before funds are awarded.

2. **Enforce civil rights and environmental justice compliance in land use policy.**

   Formalize civil rights and environmental justice impact assessments as mandatory requirements for federally funded land use and infrastructure projects. These assessments must include enforceable criteria (not voluntary guidance) for identifying disparate impacts and cumulative burdens, independent review from a community oversight board, and complete public transparency. To prevent agencies from siding with polluters, the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the EPA should increase proactive investigations. Federal funding to industrial companies should be tied to a clear track record of compliance with anti-discrimination and environmental justice laws.

3. **Expand support for public and community ownership and cooperative infrastructure models.**

   Increase funding and technical assistance for land trusts, housing cooperatives, and community infrastructure owned or governed by local residents. HUD and USDA Rural Development can play a role in expanding access to land and capital for Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color that have been historically dispossessed of land and denied infrastructure investment.

4. **Increase federal oversight with cumulative-impacts siting requirements for all technology infrastructure.**

   Data centers and other high-consumption, polluting technological infrastructure projects require more regulation to reduce adverse effects on the environment and safeguard nearby populations. There are currently no state or federal laws that directly limit or control the construction of data centers. In some cases, projects are being rapidly approved or accelerated by the Trump Administration. Congress should amend the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to regulate the number and size of data centers and require cumulative impacts analysis, health-protective significance thresholds, and enforceable mitigation for all projects with large water and energy footprints. Environmental and social impact assessments must account for cumulative effects on nearby communities and ecosystems, grid capacity and induced energy consumption, traffic, noise, heat, and water scarcity, with documented analysis of alternatives (e.g., water-neutral designs, non-diesel backup, alternative locations) and mandatory community consultation before approval.

   Federal agencies should also require full environmental disclosure, public consultation, and consent from affected populations and Indigenous nations before permitting approvals, while prohibiting non-disclosure agreements with cities or utilities that keep proposed water and power deals confidential until late in the process and hide risks.

Just And Renewable Energy Systems

Priority Description

Focuses on democratizing energy access, opposes fossil fuel and other extractive infrastructure (such as methane pipelines and mega gas stations), promotes public and community-owned decentralized/distributed renewables, and resists climate policies that produce harmful community, environmental, and health impacts.

Policy Solutions

1. **Expand funding for energy conservation, efficiency, and literacy programs, public and community-owned decentralized/distributed renewable energy projects.**

   Direct federal grants and financing (e.g., through the DOE or the USDA Rural Development Program) to support energy conservation, efficiency, and literacy programs, the development of public and community-owned decentralized/distributed solar, wind, and microgrid systems, especially in EJ and rural communities.

2. **Mandate inclusive energy governance in federal clean energy programs.**

   Resource and require community participation and representation in federally funded energy planning processes to promote energy planning and decision-making through formal mechanisms such as public advisory boards, public comment periods, regional town halls, and community listening sessions. These participatory processes should be designed to ensure that frontline and EJ communities are equipped with the necessary information and have opportunities to provide meaningful input into how energy investments are shaped, prioritized, and evaluated. Communities should have the right, under certain circumstances, such as when a project would emit pollution into their neighborhoods, to refuse that project.

3. **Develop federal definitions and guidance for equitable energy transition.**

   Develop federal guidelines that define "clean" and "just" energy to exclude technologies such as waste incineration, biomass, carbon capture, or nuclear that may cause environmental or public health harm in frontline communities. Eliminate financial incentives and policy mechanisms that treat these approaches as if they are "clean."

4. **Invest in renewable energy workforce training in environmental justice communities.**

   Expand support through agencies like the Department of Labor (DOL) and DOE for targeted job training and apprenticeships in the renewable energy sector, prioritizing communities historically impacted by energy extraction or pollution.

5. **Establish energy efficiency standards for data centers and prevent energy cost shifting to consumers.**

   The rapid expansion of data centers has placed an enormous strain on the national energy grid network. The increased energy demand, coupled with the disinvestment of renewable energy sources, has rapidly increased the utilization of fossil fuels as well as the cost of electricity, with much of the additional cost shifting to ratepayers. Currently, there are no legally binding federal energy standards applied explicitly to the operation of data centers. Federal grants, loans, tax credits, and grid approvals should come with protective rules to ensure that the primary beneficiary (e.g., data centers) pays for all grid upgrades and the additional energy supply, so that costs are not passed down to households or small businesses. In addition, Congress should pass legislation to mandate that data centers meet specific energy performance standards, including producing or procuring a percentage of their energy from renewable sources, such as onsite solar infrastructure, before project approval. Federal agencies should also mandate that data centers publicly report their energy usage and efficiency metrics, removing any exclusions or loopholes from public disclosure requirements.

Land Stewardship And Self-Determination

Priority Description

Affirms the right of Indigenous peoples and communities of color to control and care for land. Prioritizes decolonized land practices and environmental governance.

Policy Solutions

1. **Support and institutionalize Indigenous and Black land stewardship practices.**

    Federal agencies, including the USDA, EPA, Department of the Interior (DOI), and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), should formally recognize Black agrarian and Indigenous stewardship systems as legitimate and central to climate adaptation, environmental conservation, and food sovereignty goals. This includes creating co-management frameworks for public lands, funding Indigenous-led environmental restoration projects, and integrating Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) into federal land use planning and environmental assessments.

2. **Invest in youth-led and intergenerational cultural and land-based programs.**

    Establish programs that expose Black and Indigenous youth to environmental justice, cultural restoration, and land-based learning. This includes support through the Department of Education, EPA EJ programs, and the Corporation for National and Community Service (AmeriCorps), as well as partnerships with tribal colleges, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), and land-grant institutions. These programs should be centered on intergenerational knowledge sharing, cultural survival, and pathways to land and leadership opportunities.

3. **Return and rematriate land to Indigenous peoples and tribes.**

    The federal government should take steps to return governance and ownership of federal lands to Tribal and Native Nations, especially lands seized by treaty violations, military actions, or settler encroachment. This can include restoring ancestral lands, expanding land-back provisions in federal conservation programs, and supporting the legal infrastructure for tribal stewardship. DOI and Congress should establish a permanent Land Back Fund to facilitate the voluntary transfer of lands held by public agencies or private entities to Indigenous governance.

4. **Uphold free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) and community self-determination.**

    Adopt FPIC as a standard for all federal and state projects affecting Indigenous peoples, and extend a similar, enforceable Community Right to Informed Consent for environmental justice communities, including historically Black communities, Communities of Color, and other overburdened or disenfranchised populations. This principle ensures that affected communities have the right to be fully informed, consulted, and to give or withhold consent before any land use, infrastructure, or resource project proceeds; reaffirming sovereignty, preventing exploitation, and strengthening environmental justice governance**.** Align federal leasing with FPIC principles and create a Sacred Sites "No-Go" registry that bars permits absent tribal consent and requires consent-based agreements (with enforceable terms, monitoring, and penalties) for projects sited in other EJ communities.

Legacy Pollution And Cumulative Impacts

Priority Description

Addresses generations of environmental racism and pollution burden, calling for full cleanups, remediation, restoration, and reparative policies, as well as the incorporation of protections against cumulative impacts into permitting frameworks.

Policy Solutions

1. **Remediate contaminated land and water with community leadership.**

   Expand funding and oversight of legacy pollution cleanups, including military contamination, through programs like the EPA's Superfund and Brownfields initiatives. These efforts must go beyond technical remediation by requiring transparent timelines, public access to environmental data, and direct community engagement throughout the process. Federal policy should also support funding for community-based organizations to serve as technical advisors and facilitators, ensuring that local voices guide cleanup priorities and decisions.

2. **Require denials of environmental permits in certain conditions based on cumulative impacts (CI).**

   Track and engage in federal legislative efforts to reform decision-making processes for environmental permits, protecting communities from cumulative impacts. Such efforts include the proposed CI amendments to the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act in the A. Donald McEachin Environmental Justice for All Act (formerly S. 919, 118th Congress, also known as 'EJ for All'). Assessments should be required in areas with overlapping pollution sources and communities exposed to high pollution levels, with an emphasis on rural, tribal, and EJ communities. Federal agencies, including the EPA, HUD, and the Army Corps of Engineers, should also integrate cumulative impact assessments (CIAs) and health impact assessments (HIAs) into their environmental review processes under NEPA and within their respective processes. Community-submitted data and lived experience should be considered critical inputs in these assessments.

3. **Enforce accountability for industrial polluters.**

   Advocate for Congress to pass legislation that embeds environmental justice principles more systematically within the Department of Justice's enforcement framework, particularly to strengthen Title VI enforcement, and to consider provisions such as those proposed in the Empowering and Enforcing Environmental Justice Act (S.720, 119th Congress, 2025), including the establishment of an Office of Environmental Justice within the DOJ. In addition to this, strengthen enforcement of environmental regulations by expanding EPA inspections, requiring safe decommissioning and closure plans, and partnering with state Attorneys General to uphold legal decisions that protect overburdened communities. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act should be enforced to challenge environmental permitting decisions that result in racially disproportionate pollution burdens.

4. **Reform mining laws and strengthen environmental safeguards for extractive industries.**

   Modernize the 1872 Mining Law and expand the Clean Water Act (CWA) and CAA to close regulatory loopholes that allow mining operations (especially for coal, uranium, copper, and "critical minerals") to endanger communities, sacred sites, and water sources, Federal and state agencies must enforce strict monitoring and contamination standards, and fund long-term remediation of abandoned and active mines. A just energy transition must prioritize restoration over extraction, protecting cultural heritage, groundwater, and biodiversity.

Sustainable Agriculture And Food Justice

Priority Description

Addresses the harms of industrial agriculture (i.e., CAFOs) on land, water, workers, and communities, especially for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant, and low-wealth communities, while advancing agroecological and just food systems.

Policy Solutions

1. **Eliminate regulatory loopholes for industrial food animal production.**

   Advocate for Congress to amend and reverse the exemptions put in place by the Fair Agricultural Reporting Method (FARM) Act passed in 2018 that shield Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) from environmental reporting under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (also known as CERCLA or Superfund) and the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA), and oversight under the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

2. **Fund community-led research on industrial agriculture impacts.**

   Establish dedicated USDA and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant programs for community-owned research on the environmental and health impacts of industrial agriculture (e.g., animal waste lagoons, use of veterinary drugs, pesticide use, agricultural run-off, noxious odors), with priority for frontline communities. Federal agencies should also support integration of community-driven findings into federal regulatory and enforcement decisions (e.g., EPA rulemakings, USDA conservation priorities).

3. **Strengthen federal labor standards for farmworkers.**

   Advocate for Congress to expand labor protections for migrant workers, such as amending the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act, and updating OSHA regulations. These reforms should include establishing a national minimum legal age for agricultural work, aligning it with the standards applied to non-agricultural industries. In addition, Congress should mandate national protections against pesticide exposure, including enforceable buffer zones, safety training, and access to personal protective equipment. Finally, federal law must strengthen enforcement of standards related to migrant housing, extreme heat protections, and the guarantee of livable wages for all farmworkers.

4. **Support regenerative and Indigenous agriculture through farm bill programs and federal food access and nutrition programs.**

   Reform USDA programs (e.g., Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Stewardship Program) to fund regenerative practices, better support Black, Indigenous, and cooperative farmers, and recognize and support Indigenous TEK and culturally relevant food systems. Expand federal food programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the Women, Infants, and Children program, and the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program to prioritize and increase access to fresh, nutrient-dense foods from local BIPOC farmers. Incentivize institutional procurement at the federal level (e.g, hospitals, prisons) from regenerative, community-based, and small-scale producers.

Water Quality & Access

Priority Description

Ensures clean water as a fundamental right. Prioritizes enforcement in communities disproportionately affected by industrial and other polluting discharges and failing infrastructure.

Policy Solutions

1. **Strengthen water quality standards to reflect co-occurring burdens and risk.**

   The EPA, under the CWA, the Toxic Substances Control Act, Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), and other relevant environmental statutes, should update national water standards to ensure they adequately protect communities experiencing multiple and overlapping environmental and health burdens. Standards should follow the latest science and a precautionary approach for contaminants such as lead, PFAS, nitrates, arsenic, and uranium, recognizing that people experience co-occurring hazards across water pathways and heightened susceptibility.

2. **Expand and integrate community-led water monitoring for environmental justice.**

   Increase federal support for community-based water monitoring through EPA grants and partnerships with tribes, universities, and community organizations. Fund routine, standardized testing in EJ-designated areas, schools, public housing, and high-risk zones; ensure independent sampling; and formally integrate results into enforcement and permitting. EPA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) should maintain a public, tract-level dashboard tracking drinking- and surface-water quality and cumulative health risks.

3. **Fund and enforce equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation.**

   Advocate for Congress to pass legislation that significantly invests in drinking water and sewer infrastructure, with a focus on PFAS removal, lead pipe replacement, and support for low-income communities. The Water Affordability, Transparency, Equity and Reliability (WATER) Act, reintroduced by Sen. Sanders and Rep. Watson Coleman in May 2025, offers one model by proposing at least $35 billion in dedicated funding for these priorities. Federal funding tools, such as the EPA's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and the USDA's Rural Utilities Service, must be aligned with environmental justice goals, ensuring that these communities are not excluded from infrastructure planning and upgrades.

   To protect public health, the EPA must also strengthen enforcement of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) and refrain from delegating enforcement authority (primacy) to state agencies with poor records on public health and environmental justice. In cases where such authority has already been granted, EPA should review and potentially revoke state primacy, giving serious weight to community concerns and documented failures.

4. **Close loopholes that exempt polluting facilities from environmental regulation in the Clean Water Act.**

   Congress must amend and end exemptions for specific industrial and agricultural facilities, such as CAFOs, from key provisions of the CWA. These facilities must be subject to the same permitting, emissions disclosure, and public notification standards as other regulated sectors.

5. **Regulate and ensure accountability and transparency for the water usage of high-consumption infrastructure.**

   High-consumption infrastructure, such as **data centers,** poses serious risks to water resources, especially in drought-prone and energy-stressed regions. Projects like *Project Blue* in Arizona have highlighted how large-scale developments are often approved without full public disclosure of their **water and energy consumption** or **community impacts**, and without meaningful consultation with **Indigenous nations and local residents**. There is an urgent need to create a regulatory framework related to water usage, access, and compromised water quality. To protect water sources from these types of developments, ensure that these facilities comply with existing CWA intake standards for cooling water intake structures (CWA §316(b)), and require water-use minimization (air-cooled, reclaimed water) and basin-level no-net-increase withdrawals in stressed aquifers. Congress should also require federal, state, and local oversight of data center siting and permitting to prevent excessive water and energy consumption and a moratorium on development in drought-prone or overburdened areas.

Appendix A: Glossary and Resources

Term	Acronym or Alias	Definition	Links/Resources
A. Donald McEachin Environmental Justice for All Act (S.919, 118th Congress)	EJ for All Act	A proposed bill that aims to strengthen environmental justice protections, public health safeguards, and community participation.	Congress.gov. https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/919
Army Corps of Engineers	USACE	A federal agency that provides engineering services, including civil works and military construction.	USACE. https://www.usace.army.mil/
Black, Indigenous, People of Color	BIPOC	A term used to recognize the unique experiences of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color.	Garcia, Sandra E. "Where did BIPOC come from?" The New York Times 17 (2020): 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/article/what-is-bipoc.html
Bureau of Indian Affairs	BIA	An agency under the Department of the Interior providing services to American Indians, Native Tribes, Nations, and Alaska Natives.	BIA. https://www.bia.gov/
Clean Air Act	CAA	A foundational federal environmental law regulating air emissions from stationary and mobile sources. It defines EPA's responsibilities for protecting and improving the nation's air quality and the stratospheric ozone layer.	EPA. https://www.epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview
Clean Water Act	CWA	A foundational federal environmental law governing water pollution to ensure clean surface waters.	EPA. https://www.epa.gov/laws-regulations/summary-clean-water-act
Community Advisory Boards	CABs	Groups of local residents providing input on development, environment, and policy decisions affecting their communities.	Newman, Susan D. et. al., "Community Advisory Boards in Community-Based Participatory Research: A Synthesis of Best Processes." *Preventing Chronic Disease* 8, no. 3 (2011): A70. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3113359/.
Community Development Block Grant for Disaster Recovery	CDBG-DR	HUD-administered funds that help communities recover from disasters, especially for infrastructure and housing.	HUD Exchange. https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/cdbg-dr/

Term	Acronym or Alias	Definition	Links/Resources
Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act	CERCLA (Superfund)	A foundational federal EJ law that provides a federal 'Superfund' to clean up uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous-waste sites.	EPA. 'Superfund: CERCLA Overview.' https://www.epa.gov/superfund/superfund-cercla-overview
Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations	CAFOs	Large-scale industrial agricultural facilities that confine large numbers of animals for feeding.	Earthjustice, *Petition to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for a Presumption That CAFOs Using Wet Manure Management Systems Emit Dangerous Levels of Air Pollution*, October 2022. https://earthjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/cafo_presumptionpetition_withexhibits_oct2022.pdf.
Conservation Stewardship Program	CSP	A USDA program that offers long-term financial and technical assistance to compensate agricultural and forest producers who agree to increase their level of conservation by adopting additional conservation activities.	USDA NRCS. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/csp-conservation-stewardship
Corporation for National and Community Service	CNCS (AmeriCorps)	A federal agency supporting volunteerism through programs like AmeriCorps.	AmeriCorps. https://www.americorps.gov/about/our-agency/cncs
Cumulative Impacts and Cumulative Impact Assessments	CIA	Policies or evaluations that consider the combined health and environmental impacts of multiple pollution sources in a community.	EPA. https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-11/epa-interim-cumulative-impacts-framework-november-2024.pdf
Department of Agriculture	USDA	The federal agency that develops and executes federal laws related to farming, forestry, and food.	U.S. Department of Agriculture. https://www.usda.gov/
Department of Education	ED	The federal agency that establishes policy for and administers federal assistance to education.	U.S. Department of Education. https://www.ed.gov/
Department of Energy	DOE	The federal agency responsible for U.S. energy policy and nuclear safety.	U.S. Department of Energy. https://www.energy.gov/
Department of Health and Human Services	HHS	The federal agency responsible for protecting the health of all Americans.	HHS. https://www.hhs.gov/

Term	Acronym or Alias	Definition	Links/Resources
Department of Homeland Security	DHS	The federal agency responsible for public security, including disaster prevention and management.	DHS. https://www.dhs.gov/
Department of Housing and Urban Development	HUD	The federal agency focused on national housing needs and improving access to fair and affordable housing.	HUD. https://www.hud.gov/
Department of Justice	DOJ	The federal agency responsible for the enforcement of law and the administration of justice.	U.S. DOJ. https://www.justice.gov/
Department of Labor	DOL	The federal agency that oversees labor standards, employment, and workplace safety.	U.S. DOL. https://www.dol.gov/
Department of the Interior	DOI	The federal agency responsible for the management of federal lands and natural resources.	U.S. DOI. https://www.doi.gov/
Department of Transportation	DOT	The federal agency responsible for the nation's transportation systems and infrastructure.	U.S. DOT. https://www.transportation.gov/
Drinking Water State Revolving Fund	DWSRF	An EPA program that provides financial support to states for infrastructure improvements to public water systems.	EPA. https://www.epa.gov/dwsrf
Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act	EPCRA	A federal law requiring industries to report on the storage, use, and releases of hazardous substances to aid emergency planning.	EPA. 'Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA).' https://www.epa.gov/epcra
Empowering and Enforcing Environmental Justice Act (S.720, 119th Congress, 2025)		A proposed federal bill to enhance enforcement mechanisms for environmental justice laws within the Department of Justice.	Congress.gov. https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/senate-bill/720

Term	Acronym or Alias	Definition	Links/Resources
Environmental Justice Community	EJ Community	Although there are many definitions of an EJ community in policy and practice, for the purposes of this framework, it is referred to broadly as a geographically defined population that is composed significantly of individuals of color and/or low-income households, experience disproportionate exposure to pollution, are at the frontlines of climate impacts, and other environmental harms, while often having limited influence in environmental decision-making.	Ana Isabel Baptista et al., *Defining Environmental Justice Communities for EJ Policies* (Tishman Environment and Design Center, June 2021), https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d14dab43967cc000179f3d2/t/682cb3aa9e6e793b81491512/1747760042140/Defining+Environmental+Justice+Communities+for+EJ+Policies_Final+_June2021.pdf.
Environmental Protection Agency	EPA	The federal agency tasked with environmental protection and enforcing regulations to reduce pollution.	EPA. https://www.epa.gov/
Environmental Quality Incentives Program	EQIP	A USDA NRCS program that provides short-term financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers and non-industrial forest managers who agree to adopt new conservation practices.	NRCS USDA. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/eqip-environmental-quality-incentives
Fair Agricultural Reporting Method Act	FARM Act	A federal law that exempts farms from reporting emissions from animal waste under CERCLA and EPCRA.	Congress.gov. 'Fair Agricultural Reporting Method Act.' https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/2421
Fair Labor Standards Act	FLSA	A federal labor law that establishes minimum wage, overtime pay, and child labor protections.	U.S. DOL. https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/flsa
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	FDIC	The federal agency that insures deposits in banks and promotes financial stability.	FDIC. https://www.fdic.gov/
Federal Emergency Management Agency	FEMA	A federal agency under DHS responsible for coordinating responses to disasters that overwhelm local resources.	FEMA. https://www.fema.gov/
Federal Records Act	FRA	A federal law established in 1950 that regulates the creation, preservation, and disposal of federal agency records. The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) oversees the FRA, assists agencies, and approves the disposal or permanent archiving of records.	National Archives. https://www.archives.gov/news/topics/federal-records-act

Term	Acronym or Alias	Definition	Links/Resources
Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act		A federal law that requires agency data to be accessible and requires agencies to plan to develop statistical evidence to support policymaking.	HHS. https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/data/evidence-act-0
Freedom of Information Act	FOIA	A federal law that grants the public the right to access records from any federal agency, promoting transparency and accountability in government. It requires agencies to disclose information unless it falls under one of nine exemptions protecting interests such as personal privacy, national security, or law enforcement.	US DOJ. *The United States Department of Justice Guide to the Freedom of Information Act.* https://www.justice.gov/oip/doj-guide-freedom-information-act-0
Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program	GusNIP	A USDA program that supports projects to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables among low-income consumers.	USDA NIFA. https://www.nifa.usda.gov/grants/programs/gus-schumacher-nutrition-incentive-program
Hazardous Air Pollutants	HAPs	Air toxics, identified by the EPA, are known or suspected to cause serious health effects or adverse environmental effects. The CAA requires the EPA to regulate and monitor HAPs.	EPA. https://www.epa.gov/haps
Health Resources and Services Administration	HRSA	A federal agency under HHS that provides health care to people who are geographically isolated or economically or medically vulnerable.	HRSA. https://www.hrsa.gov/
Health Impact Assessments	HIA	Tools used to evaluate the potential health effects of a project or policy before it is built or implemented.	CDC. https://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia.htm
Hispanic-Serving Institution	HSI	A U.S. college or university is federally designated as an HSI when at least 25% of its full-time undergraduate student body is Hispanic and a significant number of its students are low-income.	Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities. https://hacu.net/research/hsi-definition/
Historically Black Colleges and Universities	HBCUs	Colleges and universities established before 1964 with the principal mission of educating Black Americans.	U.S. Department of Education. https://sites.ed.gov/whhbcu/
Inflation Reduction Act	IRA	A 2022 law that funds clean energy, environmental justice, and climate resilience programs.	Congress.gov. https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/5376

Term	Acronym or Alias	Definition	Links/Resources
Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act	IIJA	A 2021 bipartisan law, also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), allocated billions of dollars in federal funding for infrastructure, including transportation, broadband, water, and energy.	Congress.gov. https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/3684
Justice40		A federal initiative outlined in Biden's Executive Order 14096, "Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad," aimed to deliver 40% of the benefits of climate and infrastructure investments to "disadvantaged communities."	The White House Archive. https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/environmentaljustice/justice40/
Local Emergency Planning Committees	LEPCs	Community-based entities that develop emergency response plans for chemical hazards in coordination with first responders.	EPA. https://www.epa.gov/epcra/local-emergency-planning-committees
Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act	MSPA	A federal law offering employment protections to migrant and seasonal agricultural workers.	U.S. Department of Labor. https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/agriculture/mspa
National Credit Union Administration	NCUA	A federal agency that regulates and insures credit unions.	NCUA. https://www.ncua.gov/
National Environmental Policy Act	NEPA	A landmark environmental law that requires federal agencies to assess the environmental effects of their proposed actions.	EPA. https://www.epa.gov/nepa
New Source Performance Standards	NSPS	EPA-established technology-based pollution control guidelines for several types of newly constructed, renovated, and reconstructed industrial facilities.	EPA. https://www.epa.gov/stationary-sources-air-pollution/new-source-performance-standards
Next Generation Pipelines Research and Development Act (H.R. 2613, 2025)		A bipartisan pipeline safety bill that would authorize close to $250 million for the DOE and PHMSA to fund a program to develop pipeline safety technologies to improve leak detection, retrofit existing pipelines, develop advanced manufacturing techniques, and reduce environmental impacts.	Committee on Science, Space, and Technology. https://science.house.gov/2025/4/h-r-2613-the-next-generation-pipelines-research-and-development-act
Occupational Safety and Health Administration	OSHA	An agency under DOL that ensures safe and healthy working conditions by setting and enforcing standards.	OSHA. https://www.osha.gov/

Term	Acronym or Alias	Definition	Links/Resources
Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-130		Circular A-130 is guidance by the OMB that establishes general policy for information governance, acquisitions, records management, open data, workforce, security, and privacy. It also emphasizes the role of both privacy and security in the Federal information life cycle.	Federal Register. https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/07/28/2016-17872/revision-of-omb-circular-no-a-130-managing-information-as-a-strategic-resource
Open, Public, Electronic and Necessary (OPEN) Government Data Act		A law that requires public government data assets to be published as machine-readable data, and each agency shall develop and maintain a comprehensive data inventory and designate a Chief Data Officer.	Data.gov. https://data.gov/open-gov/
Participatory Budgeting	PBs	A democratic process in which community members decide how to spend part of a public budget.	Participatory Budgeting Project. https://www.participatorybudgeting.org/
Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances	PFAS	Synthetic chemicals linked to health risks that are found in water, soil, and the food supply.	EPA. *Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS).* https://www.epa.gov/pfas
Permissible Exposure Limits	PELs	OSHA-defined limits on the amount or concentration of a substance in the air to protect worker health.	OSHA. *Permissible Exposure Limits – Annotated Tables.* https://www.osha.gov/annotated-pels
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration	PHMSA	An agency under DOT that develops and enforces regulations for the safe transport of fuel and hazardous materials.	PHMSA. https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/
Principles for Addressing Environmental Justice Concerns in Air Permitting		An interim operating framework developed by the national EPA workgroup that provides recommendations for analyzing and addressing EJ concerns in air permitting actions and decisions.	EPA. https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-06/EJ%20in%20Air%20Permitting%20-%20CAAAC%202023.pdf *Note that the current administration has taken down the main EPA webpage for this resource.
Public Utilities Commission, Public Service Commission, or similar names	PUC	State-level agencies that regulate utilities such as electricity, gas, water, and telecommunications.	National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners. https://www.naruc.org/

Term	Acronym or Alias	Definition	Links/Resources
Reciprocating Internal Combustion Engine (RICE) National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP)	RICE NESHAP	Two sets of federal regulations from the EPA that control air pollution from stationary engines. RICE NESHAP targets hazardous air pollutants (HAPs) and requires facilities to use 'Maximum Achievable Control Technology (MACT).	EPA. https://www.epa.gov/stationary-engines/national-emission-standards-hazardous-air-pollutants-reciprocating-internal-0
Risk Management Program	RMP	An EPA program that requires industrial facilities to develop risk management plans for hazardous substances.	EPA. https://www.epa.gov/rmp
Rural Utilities Service	RUS	An agency under the USDA that provides infrastructure financing for utilities in rural communities.	USDA. https://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/agencies/rural-utilities-service
Safe Drinking Water Act	SDWA	A federal law that protects the quality of drinking water in the U.S.	EPA. https://www.epa.gov/sdwa
Safer Communities by Chemical Accident Prevention Rule		EPA's 2024 rule update to strengthen chemical safety regulations under the Risk Management Program.	EPA. https://www.epa.gov/rmp/safer-communities-chemical-accident-prevention Coming Clean, *Trump Administration's Decision to Rehash Chemical Disaster Prevention Rules Will Endanger Millions of Workers and Fenceline Community Residents*, March 11, 2025. https://comingcleaninc.org/latest-news/in-the-news/trump-administrations-decision-to-rehash-chemical-disaster-prevention-rules-will-endanger-millions-of-workers-and-fenceline-community-residents.
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program	SNAP	A federal assistance program providing food-purchasing aid for low- and no-income individuals.	USDA FNS. https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act		A federal provision that prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs receiving federal funding.	U.S. Department of Justice. https://www.justice.gov/crt/fcs/Title VI

Term	Acronym or Alias	Definition	Links/Resources
Toxic Substances Control Act	TSCA	A federal law that regulates the introduction of new or already existing chemicals in the U.S.	EPA. https://www.epa.gov/TSCA
Toxics Release Inventory	TRI	A resource that tracks the management of certain toxic chemicals that may pose a threat to health and the environment.	EPA. https://www.epa.gov/toxics-release-inventory-tri-program
Traditional Ecological Knowledge	TEK	Indigenous and local knowledge systems about ecosystems that are passed down through generations.	U.S. Fish & Wildlife. https://www.fws.gov/story/2022-06/what-traditional-ecological-knowledge
USDA Rural Development	RD	An agency under the USDA that administers programs to improve the economy and quality of life in rural America.	USDA Rural Development. https://www.rd.usda.gov/
Water Affordability, Transparency, Equity, and Reliability Act	WATER Act	A proposed federal bill that would provide funding and resources to improve drinking water and sewer infrastructure, focusing on PFAS removal, lead pipe replacement, and additional support for low-income and rural communities.	Congress.gov. https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/916
Women, Infants, and Children	WIC	A federal assistance program for healthcare and nutrition of low-income pregnant women, breastfeeding women, and children under five.	USDA FNS. https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic