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National People's Policy Priorities for Environmental Justice

A Report for the People's Environmental Justice Advisory Council

Prepared by the Research Team at the Tishman Environment and Design Center¹

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 three regional People's Hearings: the first held in Greensboro, North Carolina (NC), on June 10–11, 2025; **the second held on September 4–5, 2025, in Tucson, Arizona (AZ); and the third held on November 21–22, 2025, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (PA).** It also includes information on existing and proposed federal policies that could be enhanced, developed, or revised to advance environmental and climate justice. These proposed priorities and policy recommendations represent an iterative instrument for PEJAC members to review, debate, and refine. They provide a preliminary model for developing national policies, funding, and organizing efforts that align with EJ principles and the goals of EJ communities.²

As additional People's Hearings have been held, this proposed framework continues to grow and evolve, incorporating new perspectives and policy solutions informed by the organizing and lived experiences of EJ groups across different regions. For example, **the additional insights, issues, and solutions derived from the AZ hearing can be seen in red text, and the additional insights, issues, and solutions derived from the PA hearing can be observed in blue text.**

Methods and Limitations

The eleven priority areas in this document were developed through a thematic analysis conducted by the Tishman Center research team of over 160 total testimonies recorded across the NC, AZ, and PA People's Hearings, with documentation support from local and partner organizations during the hearings.³ Notetakers from the Tishman Center, the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network (NCEJN), and volunteers from Michigan recorded and synthesized testimonies in North Carolina. In Arizona, notetakers included Tishman Center staff and volunteers from the Indigenous Resilience Center at the University of Arizona. **In Pennsylvania, the Tishman Center and Earthjustice staff documented and synthesized testimonies.** Using a collaborative and iterative coding process, the research team organized recurring EJ issues, demands, and proposed solutions into overarching thematic "buckets" that reflect the concerns voiced by participants. After each hearing, the team further refined these priorities and conducted secondary research on existing and proposed federal policies, programs, and regulations. This methodology centers lived experience as core data and affirms grassroots leadership in developing a national EJ agenda grounded in justice and equity.

¹ Jennifer Santos Ramirez, senior researcher; Madeleine Killough, data analyst; Yukyam Lam, research director and senior scientist; and Julie Syversen, research assistant.

² 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 low-wealth households, who live at the direct intersection of environmental hazards and socio-economic vulnerability. EJ communities experience disproportionate exposure to pollution and are at the frontlines of climate impacts and other environmental harms while often having limited influence in environmental decision-making.

³ The NC hearing had nearly 500 participants and 73 testimonies, the AZ hearing had almost 200 participants and 46 testimonies, and the PA hearing had 170 participants and 49 testimonies.

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. Solutions are centered on the reduction of cumulative impacts, neighborhood hot spots, and meaningful community participation in monitoring, corporate accountability, and regulatory enforcement.	1. Enhance national ambient air quality and air toxics standards to reflect cumulative burdens/risk and close industrial loopholes. 2. Expand and integrate community-led air monitoring for environmental justice protections. 3. Regulate and control air pollution from high-consumption infrastructure, such as energy-intensive data centers. 4. Strengthen air permitting processes and standards to prevent disproportionate harms for EJ communities.	Air Pollution; Industrial Siting; Local Testing And Monitoring; Industrial Regulatory Loopholes; Air Permitting
Climate Resilience and Adaptation	Focuses on community-led solutions to climate impacts, including heat, storms, fires, and flooding, giving priority to infrastructure, housing, and funding that builds long-term safety and well-being.	1. Advance community-led climate resilience planning and hazard assessments. 2. Strengthen emergency planning and response, and public accountability. 3. Prioritize equitable, climate-resilient recovery and safe housing in communities impacted by climate change and pollution-burdened areas. 4. Establish extreme heat protections for vulnerable populations and worker safety.	Disaster Management; Emergency Planning; Housing Protections; Extreme Heat Issues; Flooding; Energy-efficient Housing Upgrades; Accessibility
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.	1. Mandate transparent and proactive public notification of hazardous environmental exposures. 2. Expand healthcare access for underserved and overburdened communities. 3. Codify legally enforceable workplace protections against environmental and occupational exposures. 4. 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 Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant, and low-wealth communities have meaningful roles in decisions, enforcement, and oversight.	1. Institutionalize community advisory boards in federally funded projects. 2. Support participatory budgeting and community control of public funds. 3. Enforce moratorium requirements and prior notification for hazardous projects. 4. Advance data justice and community access to environmental information.	Voting Rights; Participatory Planning; Intergenerational Engagement & Learning; Community Advisory Boards; Data Access

National People's Policy Priorities for Environmental Justice

Priority	Description	Policy Solutions	Policy Issues
Economic Justice and Funding	Calls for redirecting public and private climate investments toward the benefit of frontline communities. Emphasizes community ownership, good jobs, and equitable access to resources.	1. Protect and expand pathways for community ownership of land, housing, and enterprises. 2. Put federal money directly into community-led economic development and climate solutions. 3. Reform federal property valuations and advocate for protective tax policies and relief tools to support low-wealth communities. 4. Support community-owned, energy-efficient, climate-resilient, affordable housing development.	Community-Owned; Direct Funding; Participatory Budgeting; Green Jobs; Climate-Resilient Affordable Housing
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.	1. Tie federal infrastructure funding to inclusive and equitable land use practices, including health-protective siting and design for public facilities, such as schools, hospitals, and correctional facilities. 2. Enforce civil rights and environmental justice compliance in land use policy. 3. Expand support for public and community ownership and cooperative infrastructure models. 4. 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 and heat pumps, among other options; and resists climate policies that produce harmful community, environmental, and health impacts.	1. Expand funding for energy conservation, efficiency, and literacy programs, as well as public and community-owned decentralized/distributed renewable energy projects. 2. Mandate inclusive energy governance in federal clean energy programs. 3. Develop federal definitions and guidance for equitable energy transition. 4. Invest in renewable energy workforce training in environmental justice communities. 5. 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.	1. Support and institutionalize Indigenous and Black land stewardship practices. 2. Invest in youth-led and intergenerational cultural and land-based programs. 3. Return and rematriate land to Indigenous peoples and tribes. 4. Respect treaty rights in all federal and state permitting decisions and uphold free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) and community	Indigenous Sovereignty; Land Back; Community Land Trusts; Black Farmers/Land Restoration; Cultural Land Practices; Consent; Public and Sacred Land

National People's Policy Priorities for Environmental Justice

Priority	Description	Policy Solutions	Policy Issues
		self-determination.	
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.	1. Remediate contaminated land and water with community leadership. 2. Require denials of environmental permits in certain conditions based on cumulative impacts (CI). 3. Enforce accountability for industrial polluters. 4. Reform mining laws and strengthen environmental safeguards, such as health-protective setback siting standards for extractive industries. 5. Establish health-protective standards for noise, vibration, dust, and indoor air pollution from hazardous industrial facilities, drilling, mining, or related industrial development.	Superfund Sites; Coal Ash; PFAS; Legacy Waste; Brownfields; Cumulative Impacts; Landfills; Mining and Fracking; Indoor Pollution (mold, dust, noise)
Sustainable Agriculture and Food Justice	Addresses the harms of industrial agriculture (i.e., CAFOs) on land, water, workers, and communities, especially for BIPOC, immigrant, and low-wealth communities, while advancing agroecological and just food systems.	1. Eliminate regulatory loopholes for industrial food animal production. 2. Fund community-led research on industrial agriculture impacts. 3. Strengthen federal labor standards for farmworkers. 4. 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.	1. Strengthen water quality standards to reflect co-occurring burdens and risk. 2. Expand and integrate community-led water monitoring for environmental justice. 3. Fund and enforce equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation. 4. Close loopholes that exempt polluting facilities from environmental regulation in the Clean Water Act. 5. Establish accountability and transparency for the water usage of high-consumption infrastructure.	Water Access & Affordability; Industrial Runoff (PFAS); Groundwater Contamination; 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 and Strategies

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

Strategies

- **Modernize national air quality standards:** Direct the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to revise the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) and **hazardous air pollutant (HAP) rules**. These updates should use the latest peer-reviewed science and take a precautionary approach when setting pollutant limits.
- **Integrate cumulative-risk assessments:** Require the EPA to develop and implement a cumulative-risk assessment framework that evaluates co-occurring pollutants, different ways people are exposed, and community vulnerability factors such as age, pre-existing health conditions, and socioeconomic status in all air-quality regulatory processes.
- **Close existing exemptions:** Amend the Clean Air Act to remove statutory exemptions for industrial and agricultural operations (e.g., concentrated animal-feeding operations and certain agricultural facilities), ensuring they are subject to the same permitting and emissions-disclosure requirements as all other sources.

Solution 2: Expand and integrate community-led air monitoring for environmental justice protections.

Strategies

- **Increase federal funding and improve sensor infrastructure:** Expand EPA grant funding and set up affordable, calibrated air sensor networks in communities near highways, ports, refineries, and schools. Combine these networks with public data platforms that aggregate and display real-time measurements.
- **Build local capacity and standardized monitoring:** Offer hands-on training and technical toolkits to help community members install air monitors and interpret sensor data. Require independent lab testing for PM_{2.5}, **diesel particles, NO₂, O₃, and toxic releases** in environmental justice-designated areas.
- **Integrate community data into regulatory decisions:** Authorize verified citizen science data to be used as a formal input for EPA permitting and enforcement. Grow partnerships with universities, tribal groups, and community-based organizations to sustain monitoring programs.
- **Develop a national public health dashboard:** Require the EPA and CDC to develop a public dashboard that tracks air and water quality and cumulative health risks by census tract. Agencies must incorporate emissions inventories and provide real-time community alerts when pollution thresholds exceed the limit.

Solution 3: Regulate and control air pollution from high-consumption infrastructure, such as energy-intensive data centers.⁴

Strategies

- ***Close the "emergency-engine" loophole:*** Apply EPA's National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) for Reciprocating Internal Combustion Engine (RICE) and New Source Performance Standards (NSPS) to all on backup generators, regardless of emergency status. Require the use of ultra-low-sulfur fuel and particulate control technologies. Emergency units that operate often should be reclassified as non-emergency and have enforceable limits on running hours.
- ***Conduct neighborhood-scale cumulative hot-spot analyses:*** Require developers to provide detailed emissions inventories and hire EPA-accredited consultants to model cumulative air-quality impacts. The reports should be shared with state agencies, local air-quality districts, tribal authorities, and community groups. If the analysis finds that cumulative risk is above health-based thresholds, the EPA should issue enforceable mitigation procedures that must be met before the project can move forward.
- ***Require full public disclosure of environmental and energy impacts:*** Compel developers to publish detailed, publicly available reports on estimated water use, energy consumption, air pollution emissions, and projected community impacts for every proposed project. Hold meaningful community consultations before approving permits for data centers and other large-scale developments.
- ***Implement construction and transport controls:*** Enforce dust-suppression measures and require all construction and delivery trucks to have covered loads. Designate specific truck routes with buffer zones to keep a safe distance from residences, schools, and other sensitive areas.

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

Strategies

- ***Adopt a uniform EJ framework across all federal permitting programs:*** Agencies like the EPA, DOE, DOT, and others that issue federal air permits should use an EJ operating framework for every permit decision. For example, they could follow the EPA's "Principles for Addressing Environmental Justice Concerns in Air Permitting."
- ***Condition permit renewal approval to compliance history:*** Federal agencies should review an applicant's past record of compliance before renewing permits. Chronic or intentional violators should generally not qualify for renewal or could only renew under stricter and enforceable conditions, such as tighter limits, third-party audits, real-time monitoring, or penalty fees.

⁴ 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 demonstrate 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. 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.

CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION

Priority Description

Focuses on community-led solutions to climate impacts, including heat, storms, fires, and flooding, giving priority to infrastructure, housing, and funding that builds long-term safety and well-being.

Policy Solutions and Strategies

Solution 1: **Advance** community-led climate resilience planning **and hazard assessments**.

Strategies

- ***Establish dedicated federal funding for community-led resilience:*** Authorize and appropriate direct grants through FEMA, HUD, and DOE. Support frontline community organizations, tribal governments, and local partnerships in designing and implementing climate resilience projects, prioritizing historically overburdened neighborhoods.
- ***Invest in neighborhood resilience networks and hubs:*** Create federal and state grant programs to support the planning, construction, and long-term operation of climate resilience hubs. These hubs will provide essential services during extreme climate-related events, such as cooling and clean air centers, backup renewable energy and storage, emergency communications, food access, and disaster response coordination.
- ***Require community-driven adaptation planning:*** Mandate that FEMA and relevant federal agencies establish competitive and formula funding programs for state, Tribal, and local governments to develop climate adaptation and hazard mitigation plans co-designed with frontline communities.
- ***Fund integrated cumulative hazard assessments and tools:*** Support the development of publicly accessible maps, data tools, and planning resources that assess intersecting climate and environmental threats, such as extreme heat, flooding, legacy pollution, abandoned wells, and industrial hazards. Embed their use in local preparedness, infrastructure investment, and land-use planning decisions.

Solution 2: **Strengthen emergency planning and response, and public accountability.**

Strategies

- ***Strengthen community-informed emergency planning and increase public transparency:*** Mandate that Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs) under the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA) develop, regularly update, and publicly share emergency response plans. These plans should be co-created with community members, include representation from vulnerable populations, and incorporate local risk knowledge.
- ***Include diverse community representation in LEPC governance:*** Require LEPCs to include representatives from frontline communities, people with disabilities, elderly residents, and other disproportionately impacted groups. LEPCs must also hold regular, accessible public meetings with meaningful opportunities for community input and oversight.
- ***Tie federal emergency funding to accountability and compliance:*** Condition FEMA, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and other federal preparedness private contracts on the demonstrated compliance with community engagement, transparency, and reporting requirements, including annual updates on emergency plans and preparedness activities.

- **Link infrastructure funding to accessible and resilient emergency design:** Federally funded infrastructure and facility planning should incorporate safe evacuation routes, backup power for critical medical devices, accessible sheltering, and inclusive emergency preparedness measures for people with disabilities, older adults, and other high-risk populations.

Solution 3: Prioritize equitable, climate-resilient recovery and [safe housing in communities impacted by climate change and pollution-burdened areas](#).

Strategies

- **Support clean energy and resilient infrastructure in disaster recovery efforts:** Require federal recovery programs, such as FEMA's Public and Individual Assistance and HUD Community Development Block Grant–Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) programs, to invest in distributed renewable energy systems (e.g., rooftop solar, battery storage) as well as the rebuilding and modernization of essential community infrastructure in frontline communities.
- **Invest in affordable housing and community health during recovery:** Allocate a portion of disaster recovery funding to the development and preservation of affordable housing, schools, trauma-informed care services, and mental health support.
- **Link recovery investments to workforce development and economic opportunity:** Require federal and state recovery programs to incorporate green workforce training and local hiring to rebuilding efforts, with priority for impacted residents and displaced workers.
- **Require climate-resilient housing standards in pollution-burdened areas:** Ensure that federal support for rebuilding and repairing homes includes cooling, filtration, backup power, and other climate-resilient, energy-efficient features to reduce cumulative environmental burdens, especially in pollution-burdened areas or industrial corridors.

Solution 4: Establish extreme heat protections for vulnerable populations and worker safety.⁵

Strategies

- **Adopt strong federal heat safety standards for workers:** Create a comprehensive heat protection standard for both indoor and outdoor workers through the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). This standard should include rest breaks, hydration, cooling access, heat illness prevention plans, and whistleblower protections, with priority enforcement for high-risk industries and higher-temperature regions.
- **Establish utility shutoff moratoriums during heat emergencies:** Mandate that utilities receiving federal funding or regulatory approval implement no-disconnect policies during National Weather Service heat alerts and extreme heat events, so that ratepayers have continuous access to electricity for cooling, refrigeration of medications, and medical devices.
- **Fund community cooling and clean-air resilience infrastructure:** Direct FEMA, DOE, HHS, and other federal agencies to designate and support accessible cooling and clean-air hubs with backup power in high-risk communities, including mobile-home parks, public housing, Tribal communities, and rural areas with limited cooling access.
- **Target resources to communities facing cumulative heat and environmental risks:** Prioritize federal funding, technical assistance, and emergency preparedness resources for areas with intersecting vulnerabilities, such as poor air quality, high energy burden, pre-existing health conditions, and poor housing conditions. Use equity screening tools and community input to guide these investments.

⁵As 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.

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 and Strategies

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

Strategies

- ***Strengthen public disclosure and reporting requirements:*** Expand and enforce notification requirements under existing laws such as EPCRA and the Toxics Release Inventory (TRI), including stricter reporting thresholds and stronger penalties for noncompliance.
- ***Require real-time, accessible public notification of hazardous releases:*** Mandate that facilities notify nearby residents immediately following chemical releases or exposure incidents using clear, multilingual, and culturally accessible communication formats.
- ***Establish national standards for cumulative and chronic exposure reporting:*** Direct EPA to require reporting not only for large accidental releases but also for chronic low-level exposures and routine emissions that contribute to cumulative health risks in frontline communities.

Solution 2: Expand healthcare access for underserved and overburdened communities.

Strategies

- ***Expand community-based healthcare infrastructure:*** Direct HHS to increase funding for mobile clinics, community health centers, and public health surveillance in communities experiencing elevated environmental and climate-related health risks.
- ***Prioritize frontline communities in federal health investments:*** Require agencies, such as the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), to target a percentage of funding and technical assistance to historically underserved communities with disproportionate exposure burdens and limited healthcare access.
- ***Integrate environmental exposure screening into health services:*** Mandate the incorporation of environmental exposure histories and climate-related health risks into federally funded healthcare assessments, clinical services, and public health monitoring programs.

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

Strategies

- ***Establish updated exposure standards for hazardous chemicals:*** Require OSHA to update outdated permissible exposure limits (PELs), adopt science-based standards reflecting current health research, and establish cumulative exposure protections for workers exposed to multiple hazards.
- ***Increase inspections and enforcement in high-risk industries:*** Direct the Department of Labor (DOL) to expand workplace inspections and enforcement actions in sectors with elevated exposure risks, including agriculture, waste management, construction, and manufacturing.

- **Maintain worker protections across employment types:** Mandate that workplace health protections apply equally to subcontracted, temporary, and contingent workers, with clear employer accountability and disclosure of occupational risks.
- **Require employer transparency and worker right-to-know protections:** Strengthen requirements for employers to disclose chemical hazards, exposure risks, and protective measures while expanding whistleblower protections and worker participation in safety planning.

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

Strategies

- **Strengthen and fully implement safety regulations for chemical facilities:** Require EPA to maintain, enforce, and expand the Risk Management Program (RMP) rule. Incorporate safer technology standards, worst-case scenario assessments, meaningful community engagement, and public transparency.
- **Safeguard and strengthen federal chemical safety regulations against rollback:** Direct federal agencies to uphold and enhance the 2024 "Safer Communities by Chemical Accident Prevention" provisions and prevent regulatory changes that could increase risks for frontline communities.
- **Improve pipeline safety standards and community protections:** Authorize the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) within the Department of Transportation (DOT) to enforce comprehensive inspections of aging pipelines and community notification protocols for leaks and incidents. Provide public risk mapping, prioritizing disinvested communities, such as EJ, tribal, and rural communities.
- **Invest in infrastructure modernization and interagency coordination:** Promote federal legislation and funding for pipeline retrofits, leak detection technology, and climate-resilient infrastructure upgrades. Strengthen coordination among EPA, PHMSA, DOE, and LEPCs to improve emergency response and risk reduction. 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 and Strategies

Solution 1: Institutionalize community advisory boards in federally funded projects.

Strategies

- ***Establish community advisory boards (CABs) for federally funded projects:*** Federal agencies like the EPA, DOT, HUD, and DOE should condition infrastructure, environmental, and energy funding on the establishment of CABs in communities carrying disproportionate pollution and climate burdens.
- ***Give CABs decision-making authority:*** CABs should have defined roles in planning, implementation, and oversight from the start, not be brought in at the end to sign off on decisions already made.
- ***Provide funding, stipends, and technical assistance to support community participation:*** Allocate federal resources to compensate community members, build capacity, and offer independent technical expertise, enabling residents to engage effectively in complex project decisions.
- ***Align CAB representation with the demographics of impacted communities:*** Invest in recruitment measures to guarantee that CAB membership reflects populations most affected by pollution, disinvestment, and climate risks, including frontline residents, Tribal communities, and historically marginalized groups.

Solution 2: Support participatory budgeting and community control of public funds.

Strategies

- ***Establish federal funding for participatory budgeting:*** Instruct federal agencies to develop grant programs and financial incentives for local participatory budgeting (PB) initiatives, with priority going to communities facing systemic disinvestment and environmental harms.
- ***Invest in civic engagement infrastructure and capacity building:*** Allocate funding for multilingual outreach, community facilitation training, digital engagement tools, and youth leadership development to enable inclusive and accessible participatory budgeting.
- ***Make participatory budgeting count in federal investment decisions:*** Integrate participatory budgeting processes to inform how climate, infrastructure, public health, and community development dollars are allocated at local and regional levels.
- ***Pilot participatory grantmaking within federal programs:*** Authorize federal agencies to pilot and adopt participatory models in grantmaking, allowing grantees and community members to co-develop funding priorities, selection criteria, and investment decisions.

Solution 3: Enforce moratorium requirements and prior notification for hazardous projects.

Strategies

- ***Establish moratorium periods for hazardous projects:*** Establish a formal moratorium period for federally funded or permitted hazardous infrastructure projects, such as pipelines, waste facilities, polluting industries, data centers, and fossil fuel infrastructure. During this period, affected communities must be notified, provided with project information, and given adequate time to review before permitting decisions are made.

- ***Make public engagement and hearings genuinely accessible:*** Require agencies and project sponsors to deliver clear, culturally appropriate notifications, multilingual materials, and public hearings that offer meaningful opportunities for community input and testimony.
- ***Pause or deny projects that compound existing harm:*** Establish federal standards that require agencies to halt, modify, or reject projects when cumulative harms, disproportionate impacts, or documented community opposition are identified in designated environmental justice areas.

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

Strategies

- ***Protect federal environmental data as permanent public records:*** Amend the Federal Records Act to classify public-facing federal agency webpages, environmental datasets, and digital tools as permanent records by default.⁶ Require the National Archives (NARA) to maintain versioned public archives and mirrors of datasets, reports, and webpages before any modification or removal.
- ***Establish enforceable standards for public data preservation and access:*** Strengthen implementation of the OPEN Government Data Act by requiring protections against deletion without a public archive, stable identifiers (such as DOIs/PURLs), open APIs, bulk download access and maintaining compliance with the data governance standards outlined in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-130 regulations.
- ***Fund community data governance and equitable access to environmental information:*** Invest in community-led data systems, such as EJ advisory boards and community monitoring networks. Require federal agencies to use community-generated data in permitting, enforcement, and public health decisions, and support multilingual tools, training, and open-access platforms co-designed with impacted communities.

⁶ Recent federal actions have affected access to environmental justice data. These actions include the removal or modification of federal environmental justice mapping and screening tools from agency websites, such as the Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping tool (EJSCREEN) from official EPA webpages. Broader concerns about federal data preservation have also grown. Many researchers, advocates, and policymakers are alarmed at the fragility of public environmental information infrastructure. There is an urgent need for statutory protections to guarantee long-term public access and transparency.

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 and Strategies

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

Strategies

- ***Increase federal support for community ownership models:*** Expand grant programs and capacity-building support. Offer technical assistance to community land trusts, housing cooperatives, worker-owned enterprises, and other shared-ownership models to increase community wealth, affordable housing stock, and strengthen local economic resilience.
- ***Strengthen federal and local financial regulatory systems for community ownership.*** Direct agencies such as HUD, USDA Rural Development, and the Department of Commerce to provide loan guarantees, credit enhancements, and procurement preferences for community-owned entities in historically disinvested communities. Strengthen the authority of federal regulators, including the FDIC and NCUA, to support mission-driven lenders, CDFIs, and cooperative finance models and expand access to financial capital for community ownership.
- ***Remove regulatory barriers to shared ownership and public asset control:*** Require federal agencies to identify and remove financing barriers that restrict community acquisition of land, housing, or entrepreneurship, including barriers to public or cooperative ownership of essential assets.

Solution 2: Put federal money directly into community-led economic development and local climate solutions.

Strategies

- ***Prioritize community-led projects in climate and infrastructure funding:*** Direct federal funding to community-managed projects in land and water remediation, climate resilience, environmental restoration, and just transition planning in EJ communities. Implement grant programs that offer multi-year, flexible operating support to build long-term community capacity.
- ***Challenge discriminatory reallocation or exclusion from federal funds:*** Support civil rights enforcement, actions by state Attorneys General, and expand congressional oversight to address unlawful diversion or inequitable distribution of infrastructure, climate, and recovery funding, especially regarding rollbacks to Justice40 and related programs.
- ***Increase transparency and accountability in federal spending decisions:*** Use Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, public reporting, and impact documentation to reveal inequitable funding patterns and strengthen advocacy for fair federal investment allocation.

Solution 3: Reform federal property valuation and advocate for protective tax policies and relief tools to support low-wealth homeowners.

- ***Promote equity-based property valuation standards:*** Offer technical assistance and other incentives to help states and municipalities implement equitable property assessment systems. These systems should prevent inflated real estate valuations in gentrifying or historically disinvested neighborhoods and reduce displacement pressures on low-wealth homeowners.

- ***Expand federal tax relief and anti-displacement tools:*** Strengthen and expand financial incentive mechanisms such as low-wealth housing tax credits, energy-efficiency rebates, property tax relief programs, and direct homeowner assistance to shield vulnerable homeowners and residents from rising housing costs and climate-related investment pressures.
- ***Challenge regressive tax policies that drive inequality:*** Mobilize national coalitions to advocate for legislative and judicial reforms that address federal tax provisions contributing to land speculation, housing unaffordability, and predatory real estate practices, especially for BIPOC and low-wealth communities.

Solution 4: Support community-owned, energy-efficient, climate-resilient, affordable housing development.

Strategies

- ***Invest in community-owned, climate-resilient housing development:*** Increase federal funding for affordable, energy-efficient, and climate-resilient community-owned housing. Support cooperatives, community land trusts, and mixed-income models so that frontline and low-wealth families can have access to homes that can resist extreme heat, flooding, poor air quality, and rising energy costs.
- ***Prioritize historically excluded communities in housing finance programs:*** Instruct HUD, USDA Rural Development, DOE, and related agencies to give priority to financing, tax credits, and loan guarantees for historically excluded and environmentally overburdened regions, which will help make climate-safe housing accessible to working families and vulnerable populations.
- ***Align housing investments with energy efficiency and renewable energy:*** Require federally supported developments to meet high-efficiency building standards, incorporate renewable energy, and include protections against displacement to reduce utility costs and maintain long-term affordability.

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 and Strategies

Solution 1: Tie federal infrastructure funding to inclusive and equitable land use practices, including health-protective siting and design for public facilities, such as schools, hospitals, and correctional facilities.

Strategies

- **Condition major federal infrastructure funding on equity and civic engagement:** Direct federal agencies, including DOT, HUD, and EPA, to require compliance with equity criteria before awarding major federal funding, including future legislative packages and programs. Standards must include meaningful community engagement, reduction of racial and spatial disparities, and measurable benefits for environmental justice communities.
- **Prohibit the hazardous siting of publicly funded facilities:** Prevent public housing, schools, hospitals, correctional facilities, and other federally funded facilities from being sited near hazardous industrial operations or pollution hotspots. Mandate cumulative impact assessments before site approval for these types of public facilities.
- **Require health-protective designs in federally funded facilities:** Incorporate protective green design standards, such as ventilation, cooling, and air filtration, in federally funded public facilities to protect vulnerable populations from environmental and climate-related risks.

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

Strategies

- **Codify binding civil rights and EJ impact standards:** Establish enforceable civil rights and environmental justice impact assessments as a condition of federally funded land use and infrastructure projects, with clear criteria for identifying disparate impacts and cumulative burdens rather than relying on voluntary guidance.
- **Institutionalize independent oversight and public transparency:** Create independent community oversight to review impact assessments with a full public disclosure of the findings, methodologies, and agency decisions before final project approval.
- **Strengthen enforcement authority and condition funding on compliance:** Increase DOJ and EPA investigative capacity and enforcement actions, and condition any federal funding or tax subsidies for industrial facilities on a demonstrated record of compliance with civil rights and environmental justice protections.

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

Strategies

- **Invest in community ownership and cooperative infrastructure models:** Expand federal funding and technical assistance for community land trusts, housing cooperatives, and locally governed infrastructure to strengthen long-term community control and support wealth retention.
- **Increase equitable access to land and capital:** Direct HUD and USDA Rural Development to expand financing tools, land access programs, and capital pathways for Black, Indigenous, and other historically dispossessed communities that have been excluded from past infrastructure investment.

Solution 4: Increase federal oversight with cumulative-impacts siting requirements for all technology infrastructure.⁷

Strategies

- ***Amend federal law to regulate high-impact technology infrastructure:*** Revise the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to require cumulative impact analysis, health-protective thresholds, and enforceable mitigation standards for data centers and other large-scale facilities with significant water and power demands.
- ***Require comprehensive environmental and social impact assessments before approval:*** Establish a requirement that all major technology infrastructure project proposals include a cumulative impacts assessment, including grid capacity, energy demand, traffic, noise, heat, and water scarcity. Project proposals should include an evaluation of feasible cleaner operation alternatives, such as water-neutral designs, non-diesel backup systems, and site locations, and undertake meaningful community consultation before permitting decisions.
- ***Guarantee transparency, consent, and public accountability in siting decisions:*** Mandate full environmental disclosure, public consultation, and documented consent processes for any proposed technology infrastructure for affected communities and prohibit non-disclosure agreements that conceal proposed water, land, or energy arrangements from public review.

⁷ There are currently no state or federal laws that directly limit or control the construction of data centers and other high-consumption, polluting technological infrastructure projects. In some cases, projects are being rapidly approved or accelerated by the Trump administration.

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 and Strategies

Solution 1: Expand funding for energy conservation, efficiency, and literacy programs, as well as public and community-owned renewable energy projects.

Strategies

- ***Invest in community-based energy conservation and literacy programs:*** Provide federal grants and financing through agencies like DOE and USDA Rural Development to support energy efficiency upgrades, conservation projects, and energy literacy programs in environmental justice and rural communities.
- ***Advance public and community-owned distributed renewable energy systems:*** Prioritize federal support for decentralized solar, wind, storage, and microgrid projects that are publicly or community owned, ensuring frontline and historically underserved communities benefit from clean energy and lower energy costs.

Solution 2: Mandate inclusive energy governance in federal clean energy programs.

Strategies

- ***Institutionalize community participation in federal energy planning:*** Integrate and formalize community representation in federally supported energy planning processes through public advisory boards, structured public comment procedures, regional town halls, and community listening sessions.
- ***Support meaningful engagement and informed decision-making:*** Provide dedicated funding, accessible information, and technical assistance to increase community participation in how energy projects and investments are shaped, prioritized, and reviewed.
- ***Recognize community authority in high-impact siting decisions:*** Establish clear standards granting communities the right to oppose or halt projects that would introduce new pollution or disproportionate harms into their neighborhoods.

Solution 3: Develop federal definitions and guidance for equitable energy transition.

Strategies

- ***Create clear federal standards for “clean” and “just” energy:*** Establish binding federal guidance that defines clean energy technologies and excludes high-risk or pollution-intensive approaches—such as waste incineration, biomass combustion, carbon capture linked to fossil fuel growth, and nuclear plants, since these can harm the environment or public health in frontline communities.
- ***Align federal incentives with equity-based clean energy standards:*** Eliminate tax credits, subsidies, and policies that label harmful or extractive technologies as ‘clean.’ Instead, direct financial support to renewable, non-polluting energy solutions that benefit communities.

Solution 4: Invest in renewable energy workforce training in environmental justice communities.

Strategies

- ***Invest in targeted workforce development in frontline communities:*** Allocate funding through agencies like the Department of Labor (DOL) and DOE for renewable energy job training, apprenticeships, and career programs that serve communities affected by energy extraction, pollution, and economic decline.
- ***Link clean energy investments to local hiring and just transition pathways:*** Condition federal clean energy funding on local hiring standards, workforce equity goals, and partnerships with community-based training providers to increase long-term economic opportunity for impacted workers and residents.

Solution 5: Establish energy efficiency standards for data centers and prevent energy cost shifting to consumers.⁸

Strategies

- ***Condition federal support on full cost accountability:*** Tie federal grants, loans, tax credits, and grid interconnection approvals to requirements that data centers fully finance necessary grid upgrades and additional energy supply, preventing cost shifting to households, small businesses, and other ratepayers.
- ***Set binding federal energy performance standards for data centers:*** Enact legislation requiring that large-scale data centers meet enforceable energy efficiency targets and secure a significant share of electricity from renewable sources, such as onsite solar and storage, before any project approval.

⁸ 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.

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 and Strategies

Solution 1: Support and institutionalize Indigenous and Black land stewardship practices.

Strategies

- **Formally recognize the importance of Black and Indigenous stewardship in climate resilience:** Instruct federal agencies, such as the USDA, EPA, Department of the Interior (DOI), and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), to formally recognize Black agrarian and Indigenous stewardship systems as legitimate and central to climate adaptation, environmental conservation, and food sovereignty goals.
- **Support and fund Black and Indigenous knowledge and initiatives:** Create co-management frameworks for public lands, fund Indigenous-led environmental restoration projects, and integrate Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) into land use planning and environmental assessments.

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

Strategies

- **Design cultural and land-based programs for Black and Indigenous youth:** Establish programs that expose Black and Indigenous youth to environmental justice, cultural restoration, and land-based learning, with programming centered on knowledge sharing, cultural survival, and pathways to land and leadership opportunities.
- **Build intersectoral support and institutional partnerships:** Mobilize support from 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 to increase intergenerational learning and leadership pipelines.

Solution 3: Return and rematriate land to Indigenous peoples and tribes.

Strategies

- **Restore governance and ownership of federal lands to Tribal and Native Nations:** Mandate the federal government to take steps to restore ancestral lands, expand land-back provisions within conservation and public land programs, and support the legal infrastructure for tribal stewardship, especially for lands seized by treaty violations, military actions, or settler encroachment.
- **Fund and facilitate land transfers:** Establish a permanent Land Back Fund to facilitate the voluntary transfer of lands held by public agencies or private entities to Indigenous governance.

Solution 4: Respect treaty rights in all federal and state permitting decisions and uphold free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) and community self-determination.

Strategies

- **Enforce treaty compliance:** Strengthen federal oversight of treaty compliance to protect treaty obligations for any activities that threaten Tribal lands, watersheds, cultural resources, or hunting and fishing rights.
- **Implement FPIC:** Adopt FPIC as a standard for all federal and state projects affecting Indigenous peoples.
- **Adopt a "Community Right to Informed Consent" policy for all EJ communities:** Extend an enforceable "Community Right to Informed Consent" policy for all EJ communities, including historically Black communities, Communities of Color, and other overburdened or disenfranchised populations. Uphold the right of affected communities to be fully informed, consulted, and to give or withhold consent before any project proceeds.
- **Create a sacred sites "No-Go" registry:** Align federal leasing with FPIC principles and create a Sacred Sites "No-Go" registry that bars permits without 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 and Strategies

Solution 1: Remediate contaminated land and water with community leadership.

Strategies

- **Fund remediation and cleanup of legacy pollution:** Expand funding and oversight of legacy pollution cleanups, like military contamination, through programs like the EPA's Superfund and Brownfields initiatives.
- **Mandate transparency and community engagement:** Require transparent timelines, public access to environmental data, and direct community engagement throughout the remediation process.
- **Appoint community-based organizations as technical advisors:** Support funding for community-based organizations to serve as technical advisors and facilitators to include local voices in cleanup priorities and decisions.

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

Strategies

- **Require cumulative impact assessments (CIAs) in overburdened communities:** Require CIAs in areas with overlapping pollution sources and communities exposed to high pollution levels, with an emphasis on rural, tribal, and EJ communities.
- **Incorporate cumulative and health impact assessments into federal review processes:** Direct federal agencies, including the EPA, HUD, and the Army Corps of Engineers, to integrate CIAs and health impact assessments (HIAs) into their environmental review processes under NEPA and within their respective processes.
- **Evaluate and integrate community-centered data:** Integrate community-submitted data and lived experience as critical inputs in CIAs and HIAs.

Solution 3: Enforce accountability for industrial polluters.

Strategies

- **Embed environmental justice principles into federal enforcement frameworks:** Advocate for Congress to pass legislation 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.
- **Strengthen enforcement of environmental regulations:** Expand EPA inspections of industrial pollution facilities, and require safe decommissioning and closure plans.
- **Uphold legal protections for environmental justice communities:** Partner with state attorneys general to uphold legal decisions that protect overburdened communities.
- **Challenge inequitable permitting decisions:** Enforce Title VI of the Civil Rights Act to challenge environmental permitting decisions that result in racially disproportionate pollution burdens.

Solution 4: Reform mining laws and strengthen environmental safeguards, such as health-protective setback siting standards for extractive industries.

Strategies

- **Modernize the 1872 Mining Law:** Reform the 1872 Mining Law through updated requirements and standards, including mandating that federal agencies conduct meaningful consultation with tribes before approving mining activities that will impact tribal communities and lands. Authorize federal land managers to protect special and sacred areas from future mining activities and long-term remediation, among other provisions.
- **Close regulatory loopholes for extractive operations:** Expand the Clean Water Act (CWA) and CAA to close regulatory loopholes that allow mining operations (especially for coal, uranium, copper, and “critical minerals”), fracking, and other extractive operations to endanger communities, sacred sites, and water sources.
- **Remediate and monitor contamination from mining sites:** Enforce strict monitoring and contamination standards, and fund long-term remediation of abandoned and active mines.
- **Implement setback and buffer requirements:** To prevent cumulative harms, federal agencies should adopt minimum health-protective setback and buffer requirements for wells, compressor stations, and wastewater operations near homes, schools, and drinking water sources, with more stringent distances in overburdened or high-risk communities.

Solution 5: Establish health-protective standards for noise, vibration, dust, and indoor air pollution from hazardous industrial facilities, drilling, mining, or related industrial development.

Strategies

- **Develop non-chemical pollution standards:** Require EPA, DOE, and DOT to develop and enforce national standards to address non-chemical pollution from oil and gas operations that significantly harm residents living near fracking wells, compressor stations, and drilling sites, including noise, vibration, dust, and indoor air degradation.
- **Monitor and enforce non-chemical pollution limits:** Require that operators adhere to noise and vibration limits, install noise and vibration barriers, implement dust suppression, and conduct independent, publicly accessible indoor/outdoor air monitoring at the fenceline and within affected homes.
- **Impose stricter standards in high-risk communities:** Increase thresholds and expand buffer distances in overburdened or high-risk communities, and hold companies financially liable for home damage, including cracked foundations and compromised indoor air quality.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD JUSTICE

Priority Description

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

Policy Solutions and Strategies

Solution 1: Eliminate regulatory loopholes for industrial food animal production.

Strategies

- **End reporting and oversight exemptions for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs):** 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).

Solution 2: Fund community-led research on industrial agriculture impacts.

Strategies

- **Develop grant programs for community-owned research:** 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.
- **Integrate community-driven data into policy decisions:** Support the integration of community-driven findings into federal regulatory and enforcement decisions (e.g., EPA rulemakings, USDA conservation priorities).

Solution 3: Strengthen federal labor standards for farmworkers.

Strategies

- **Strengthen migrant labor protections:** Expand labor protections for migrant workers, such as amending the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act, updating OSHA regulations, and establishing a national minimum legal age for agricultural work that aligns with the standards applied to non-agricultural industries.
- **Implement policies to reduce pesticide exposure:** Direct Congress to mandate national protections against pesticide exposure, including enforceable buffer zones, safety training, and access to personal protective equipment.
- **Improve living conditions, climate protections, and fair wages:** Strengthen enforcement of standards related to migrant housing, extreme heat protections, and the guarantee of livable wages for all farmworkers.

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

Strategies

- **Fund and support regenerative practices and BIPOC farmers:** Reform USDA programs (e.g., Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Stewardship Program) to fund regenerative practices, better support Black,

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Indigenous, and cooperative farmers, and recognize and support Indigenous TEK and culturally relevant food systems.

- ***Strengthen federal food assistance programs:*** 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.
- ***Boost procurement from regenerative and small-scale farms:*** Incentivize institutional procurement at the federal level (e.g., hospitals, prisons) from regenerative, community-based, and small-scale producers.

WATER QUALITY & ACCESS

Priority Description

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

Policy Solutions and Strategies

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

Strategies

- **Update federal standards under relevant environmental statutes:** Direct the EPA, under the CWA, the Toxic Substances Control Act, Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), and other relevant environmental statutes, to update national water standards so that they adequately protect communities experiencing multiple and overlapping environmental and health burdens.
- **Align water quality standards with the precautionary principle:** Update the water standards to follow the latest science and a precautionary approach for contaminants (e.g., lead, PFAS, nitrates, arsenic, uranium), recognizing that people who experience co-occurring hazards and exposures have a heightened susceptibility to public health issues.

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

Strategies

- **Establish federal grants and local partnerships:** Increase federal support for community-based water monitoring through EPA grants and partnerships with tribes, universities, and community organizations.
- **Fund routine water testing in vulnerable communities:** Direct the federal government to fund routine, standardized water testing in EJ-designated areas, schools, public housing, and high-risk zones.
- **Incorporate independent testing into policy decisions:** Require all water sampling to be conducted by an independent entity and formally integrate the results of water testing into enforcement and permitting decisions.
- **Develop a national, public dashboard:** Require the EPA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to also maintain a public, tract-level dashboard tracking drinking- and surface-water quality and cumulative health risks, along with other indicators.

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

Strategies

- **Fund infrastructure upgrades and repairs:** Pass legislation that invests in drinking water and sewer infrastructure, with a focus on PFAS removal, lead pipe replacement, and support for disinvested communities. The Water Affordability, Transparency, Equity, and Reliability (WATER) Act, reintroduced by Sen. Sanders and Rep. Watson Coleman in May 2025, offers a federal-level model policy.
- **Align federal funding opportunities with environmental justice goals:** Verify that funding tools, such as the EPA's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and the USDA's Rural Utilities Service, are aligned with environmental justice goals, ensuring that these communities are not excluded from infrastructure planning and upgrades.

- ***Strengthen federal enforcement of drinking water standards:*** Direct the EPA to 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.
- ***Rescind enforcement authority for states with documented failures or community concerns:*** In cases where such primacy has already been granted, EPA should review and potentially revoke state authority, giving serious weight to community concerns and documented failures.

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

Strategies

- ***Close existing exemptions:*** Amend and end CWA exemptions for specific industrial and agricultural facilities (such as drilling sites, oil and gas wells for hydraulic fracturing, agricultural stormwater discharges, and CAFOs) that allow major polluters to avoid regulation and scrutiny for water issues such as extreme usage, groundwater contamination, and industrial runoff.

Solution 5: Establish accountability and transparency for the water usage of high-consumption infrastructure.

Strategies

- ***Mandate compliance with the Clean Water Act:*** Require that high-consumption infrastructure, such as data centers, comply with existing Clean Water Act 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.
- ***Strengthen oversight of siting and permitting processes:*** Congress should require federal, state, and local oversight of data center siting and permitting to prevent excessive water and energy consumption.
- ***Enact data center moratoriums in overburdened areas:*** Implement a moratorium on data center 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." <i>Preventing Chronic Disease</i> 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/

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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, <i>Petition to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for a Presumption That CAFOs Using Wet Manure Management Systems Emit Dangerous Levels of Air Pollution</i> , 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/cnccs
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 executive department that develops and executes federal laws related to farming, forestry, rural development, 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 executive department responsible for protecting the health of all Americans.	HHS. https://www.hhs.gov/

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Term	Acronym or Alias	Definition	Links/Resources
Department of Homeland Security	DHS	The federal executive department responsible for public security, including disaster prevention and management.	DHS. https://www.dhs.gov/
Department of Housing and Urban Development	HUD	The federal executive department focused on national housing needs and improving access to fair and affordable housing.	HUD. https://www.hud.gov/
Department of Justice	DOJ	The federal executive department responsible for the enforcement of law and the administration of justice.	U.S. DOJ. https://www.justice.gov/
Department of Labor	DOL	The federal executive department 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

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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-wealth 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., <i>Defining Environmental Justice Communities for EJ Policies</i> (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

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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. <i>The United States Department of Justice Guide to the Freedom of Information Act.</i> 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-wealth 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-wealth.	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

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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 Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) for Reciprocating Internal Combustion Engine (RICE)	NESHAP for RICE	Two sets of federal regulations from the EPA that control air pollution from stationary engines. NESHAP for RICE 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
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

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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/
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	The synthetic chemicals that are linked to health risks and are found in water, soil, and the food supply.	EPA. <i>Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)</i> . 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. <i>Permissible Exposure Limits – Annotated Tables</i> . 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/

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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/
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 <i>Coming Clean, Trump Administration's Decision to Rehash Chemical Disaster Prevention Rules Will Endanger Millions of Workers and Fenceline Community Residents,</i> 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

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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
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-wealth 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-wealth pregnant women, breastfeeding women, and children under five.	USDA FNS. https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic