

ENERGY, TRANSPORTATION, AND ENVIRONMENT

Resolution ETE-20-51

A RESOLUTION ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PLATFORM

WHEREAS, all communities have a right to live free from exposure to dangerous toxic pollution in their soil as well as in the air they breathe, the food they eat, and the water they drink;

WHEREAS, persistent racial and economic inequalities—and the forces that cause them—embedded throughout our society have concentrated toxic polluters near and within communities of color, tribal communities, and low-income communities;

WHEREAS, these underlying social forces, including persistent and systematic racial discrimination and economic inequality, have created disproportionately high environmental and public health risks in these areas relative to other neighborhoods;

WHEREAS, the devastating and costly consequences of climate change threaten the health, safety, and livelihoods of people across the country, and generations of economic and social injustice have put communities on the frontlines of climate change effects;

WHEREAS, history shows that environmental regulation does not necessarily mean healthy environments for all communities, and many communities suffer from the cumulative effects of multiple pollution sources;

WHEREAS, climate policy language that addresses climate pollution must not abandon or diminish the important goal of reducing toxic pollution in all its forms;

WHEREAS, the shift to a sustainable, just, and equitable energy future requires innovative forms of investment and governance that distribute the benefits of this transition equitably and justly;

WHEREAS, this includes investing in the development of innovative decentralized models of energy provision; community governance and ownership; incorporation of social and health benefits into energy systems planning; incentivizing the inclusion of equity into future energy investment through public programs; and supporting public and private research and development to include equity considerations in new technology development;

WHEREAS, to ensure access to affordable energy for all, climate policy agendas must significantly reduce domestic energy vulnerability and poverty by addressing the problem of high energy cost burdens;

WHEREAS, to live and prosper in today's society, access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy is a basic need in daily life and fundamental to achieving rights related to health, environmental quality, education, and food and income security;

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WHEREAS, to ensure a healthy transportation and goods movement, policies must address how we must build the next century's transportation system to ensure healthy air quality for all communities, and this will require massive investment in affordable, reliable, and environmentally sustainable transportation;

WHEREAS, climate change events exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and creates new risks in our communities, and it is necessary to provide for safe, healthy communities and infrastructure;

WHEREAS, economic opportunities are lacking in many communities and as climate change deteriorates air quality, increases vector-borne disease and allergens, and contributes to a host of other public health threats, we must ensure full access to health care for all;

WHEREAS the continuing increase in wealth inequality plaques many communities across the US; and

WHEREAS, the right to return, relocation, anti-displacement and displacement are all fundamental challenges in many communities today, especially environmental justice communities.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) believes that no community is to be left behind, and that any climate policy language must address this environmental injustice head-on by prioritizing climate solutions and other policies that are aimed at reducing pollution in these legacy communities at the scale needed to significantly improve their public health and quality of life;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL believes that climate policy language must provide a healthy climate and air quality goal by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and locally harmful air pollution, and policies must prioritize reducing emissions in low-income areas and communities of color through a suite of policies, including climate mitigation policy;

BE IT FURTHER RESOVLED, that the NBCSL further believes that policy goals should be aimed at reducing carbon pollution, curb locally harmful pollution, and build resilience to improve the health, safety, and livability of all communities in a climate-changed world;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL further believes that climate solutions must be part of a comprehensive approach to reducing legacy environmental, health and economic impacts on communities and be designed intentionally to ensure that they do not impose further risks;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL further believes that a shift to an equitable energy future must be based on a inclusive, and just economy as well as create high-quality jobs with family- sustaining wages and safe and healthy working conditions, and it must make eliminating the barriers that produce unemployment and underemployment a priority;

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL further believes that given the disparities in the housing stock and infrastructure across communities, it is imperative that future energy systems provide affordable energy access that ensures a healthy standard of living that provides for the basic needs of children and families;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL further believes that transportation planning must ensure affordable transportation that provides for mobility and access to daily activities and services, including jobs, education, health care, affordable housing, and social networks;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL further believes that climate solutions must provide opportunities for localized benefits that enhance the quality of life for all communities, including by improving local air quality, access to healthy food, local economic development, public health, and community vitality;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL further believes that we must prioritize investments in communities that are the most vulnerable to climate change, including in health monitoring and research to provide rigorous and reliable research on our progress;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL further believes that to address the increase in wealth and income inequality that plagues community economic diversification is critical, that economic development policies should support products and production processes that are low-emission and sustainable;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL further believes that relocation, displacement and right to recover must ensure that sustainable investments for both mitigation and adaptation do not overburden and vulnerable communities, and it is imperative that new investments in resilient infrastructure in communities that have been historically disinvested be a priority;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED; that the NBCSL further believes that it is important to ensure that everyone has access to safe, clean, and affordable drinking water as well as maintaining and protecting water as a common resource regardless of the provider; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, members of the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate, and other federal and state government officials and agencies as appropriate.

SPONSOR: Representative Gilda Cobb-Hunter (SC)

**Committee of Jurisdiction: Energy, Transportation, and Environment Policy Committee
Certified by Committee Co-Chairs: Senator Kevin Parker (NY) and Senator Sandra Williams (OH)**

Ratified in Plenary Session: Ratification Date is December 6, 2019

Ratification is certified by: Representative Gilda Cobb-Hunter (SC), President