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Hundreds Rally For Equitable Climate Action

Residents from across the state call for statewide climate policy that protects communities of color; commemorate Hurricane Katrina

Sacramento, CA – Today, commemorating the 10th Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, 200 community leaders from across the state are rallying in the Capitol to demand climate policies that benefit and protect low-income communities and communities of color. Residents from some of the most pollution-impacted communities are pushing state legislators to pass policies to transition away from dirty fossil fuels and build clean energy in their communities.

Ten years ago with Hurricane Katrina, we saw just how devastated communities of color can be by extreme weather and the racial disparities in disaster response from the federal, state and local government. Residents from communities of color have converged in Sacramento to stand in solidarity with the struggles for climate justice in the Gulf Coast and across the nation, and win equitable climate and energy policy for all communities.

Rally speaker Leo Esclamado, who organized in New Orleans when Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005, explains, "Working class communities and communities of color throughout the Gulf Coast bear the harshest conditions of confronting both man-made disasters of poverty and climate change. Climate justice is not only essential, but must inspire community's just transitions in the face of uncertainty."

Strela Cervas, Co-Director of the California Environmental Justice Alliance says, "Community leaders hope to see policies passed that ensure another Katrina never happens again. We are on the frontlines of pollution and should be on the frontlines of solutions. Bills like SB 350, the Clean Energy and Pollution Reduction Act, and AB 693, the Multifamily Affordable Housing Renewables Program, will bring clean energy right into communities that need it the most."

New polling shows that 90 percent of Latinos agree that climate change is a serious threat to Latinos and want to see government action. Reflecting this strong support, CEJA and the organization Presente.org collected approximately 6000 signatures from Latinos across California urging passage of SB 350. CEJA is also delivering approximately 5000 signatures from community leaders to decision-makers, calling for provisions to improve local air quality in SB 32, Senator Pavley's bill that would create greenhouse gas reduction goals for 2050.

The grassroots advocacy effort and rally are part of the California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA)'s annual Congreso, a two-day conference that seeks to build a stronger movement for justice in statewide environmental policy. CEJA is a statewide coalition of community-based organizations working to advance equitable environmental policies.

CEJA is also honoring California Senate President pro Tempore Kevin De León (D-Los Angeles) for his leadership in advancing policies that protect communities overburdened by pollution, poverty, and impacted by climate change. CEJA will give Senate pro Tem De León the first ever Environmental Justice Leadership Award at the Congreso.

"Without clean air, clean water, and a livable planet, justice is merely an abstraction. I am honored to receive the Environmental Justice Leadership Award and proud to stand on behalf of a healthy environment for all Californians," said Senator De León.

The leadership award, rally and Congreso elevate the need for community-led solutions in climate policy. As people across the country and around the world gear up for another round of international climate negotiations in late Fall, people are looking to California to be a leader in equitable climate policies that benefit low-income communities of color who are hit first and worst by the impacts of climate change.

“While California leads the US in climate policy, the soul of it comes from integrating climate equity solutions that environmental justice communities are developing to move us away from toxic industries and toward renewable energy and clean transportation that our families build,” says Mari Rose Taruc, State Organizing Director at the Asian Pacific Environmental Network, a member of CEJA.

Environmental Justice Leadership Awards with Senate President Pro Tempore Kevin De Leon:
Holiday Inn Capitol Plaza, 300 J Street, California Ballroom, 10:00-11:00am.

Rally: 12-12:45 pm, West Steps of the Capitol, 10th & L Street.

For more on the new statewide poll released by Presente.org, CEJA and other partners:
<http://www.myhomesinpolucion.org/>

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California Environmental Justice Alliance is a statewide, community-led alliance that works to achieve environmental justice by advancing policy solutions. We unite the powerful local organizing of our members in the communities most impacted by environmental hazards – low-income communities and communities of color - to create comprehensive opportunities for change at a statewide level. We build the power of communities across California to create policies that will alleviate poverty and pollution. Together, we are growing the statewide movement for environmental health and social justice. www.caleja.org