



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE

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Major Environmental Justice Measures Advance in 2015 Legislative Session

Legislature Passes Bills Benefiting Low-Income Communities and Communities of Color

Sacramento, CA | September 14th, 2015 — The California Assembly and Senate passed five bills last week that advance a range of important measures to address the disproportionate burden of pollution and climate change on communities of color in California. The [California Environmental Justice Alliance](#) (CEJA), an alliance of grassroots environmental justice groups, was a key supporter for many of the bills. From direct greenhouse gas emission cuts to reforming regulatory agencies, the measures take bold steps for environmental justice in statewide policy and continue California's leadership on cutting edge solutions to climate change.

"Our voices and presence in Sacramento lead to policies that protect our communities," said Ingrid Brostrom, Senior Attorney at the [Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment](#). "The bills passed in 2015 will reduce toxic exposures of residents living near hazardous facilities, increase resources to areas burdened by environmental violations, and provide low-income residents with opportunities to participate in the new solar economy."

CEJA and members of the alliance worked on five ground-breaking bills: AB 1071 (Atkins and Garcia), SB 673 (Lara), AB 693 (Eggman), AB 1288 (Atkins and Pavley), and the historic SB 350 (De León and Leno).

"The passage of these bills represents the growing power of people of color in California. Environmental legislation must address the disproportionate burden of pollution that low-income communities and communities of color bear in California. Our decision-makers cannot leave behind people who are on the frontlines of the growing climate change crisis. This past legislative session, we saw historic partnerships between legislative leaders and community-groups across California to pass environmental policies that put equity at the center," said Strela Cervas, Co-Director of the California Environmental Justice Alliance.

Miya Yoshitani, Executive Director of the Asian Pacific Environmental Network, said: "Low-income, Asian immigrants and refugees have long endured fossil fuel pollution in our neighborhoods and we are excited to see that the solutions we have been working for in our communities—stronger democracy, cleaner air, renewable energy and equitable investments—are beginning to take hold statewide. AB 1288 (Atkins and Pavley) and AB 693 (Eggman), in particular, ensures that EJ communities are represented on the Air Resources Board and Californians living in affordable housing can benefit from solar power. We applaud the bold leadership of California legislators this year, and we will continue to work towards a state where we can all live and work in a clean, healthy, and equitable environment."

Given the growing impacts of climate change and the disproportionate burden on low-income communities and communities of color, policies like AB 1071, SB 673, AB 693, SB 32, SB 350 and AB 1288 are much needed. CEJA and our members look forward to seeing Governor Brown sign these important measures that will bring solutions to communities who are on the frontlines of climate change, pollution and poverty.

Environmental justice bills passed by the California legislature in the 2015 session:

- [AB 1071](#) by Speaker of the Assembly Toni Atkins and Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia helps ensure that communities most impacted by environmental violations see direct benefits. The bill requires statewide environmental enforcement agencies to create a policy that allows a percentage of penalty fines from environmental violations to be directed into projects that benefit environmental justice communities. AB 1071 passed the Senate with a 38-1 vote and the Assembly 78-0.
- [SB 673](#) by Senator Ricardo Lara will take important steps to ensure that low-income communities and communities of color are protected from the impacts of hazardous waste. The bill will put in place stricter permitting criteria for hazardous waste facilities managed by the Department of Toxic Substances Control. SB 673 passed the Assembly with a 43-21 vote and the Senate with a 31-7 vote.
- [AB 693](#) by Assemblymember Susan Eggman will bring local solar power to low-income communities who are often last to benefit from green technologies, in addition to promoting renewable energy and cleaner air for the state. It would create a new program that will finance solar installations on multifamily affordable housing projects. The bill also allows tenants to reduce utility costs by directly crediting their bills for the solar energy used and generated. AB 693 passed the Senate with a 26-14 vote and the Assembly with a 51-28 vote.
- [AB 1288](#) by Speaker Toni Atkins and Senator Fran Pavley will ensure that the California Air Resources Board performs more equitably and responds more effectively to issues in communities overburdened by pollution. The bill adds two representatives who work directly with low-income communities and communities of color overburdened by pollution to the California Air Resources Board (ARB).
- [SB 350](#) by Senate President pro Tempore Kevin de León and Senator Leno will advance our clean energy economy and create jobs by increasing renewable energy in California to 50% by 2030 and doubling energy efficiency in buildings.

Another major climate bill, [SB 32](#) by Senator Pavley, also saw end-of-session amendments that address environmental justice issues. The bill establishes a new greenhouse gas reduction target for 2050, requires a study on the impacts of AB 32 compliance in disadvantaged communities, and directs the California Air Resources Board to prioritize direct emission reductions as one of the most effective strategies to improve public health and air quality in overburdened communities. SB 32 was held in the Assembly, but CEJA looks forward to seeing it move forward in 2016.

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[California Environmental Justice Alliance](#) is a statewide coalition of grassroots, environmental justice organizations building a movement among low-income communities and communities of color most impacted by environmental issues to demand change. 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.

All together, we represent over 20,000 Latino, Asian Pacific American, and African American residents. Our members and partners are:

- Asian Pacific Environmental Network
- Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice
- Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment
- Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy
- Communities for a Better Environment
- Environmental Health Coalition

- Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability
- Pacoima Beautiful
- People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights
- Physicians for Social Responsibility, Los Angeles

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