



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE

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Governor Signs Nation's Biggest Low Income Solar Bill

Environmental Justice Advocates Celebrate Several Victories for Low-Income Communities of Color

Sacramento, CA | October 8, 2015 — Governor Brown created the nation's largest program aimed at increasing access for low-income Californians to solar power when he signed AB 693 (Eggman) into law on Wednesday. The bill will dedicate \$1 billion over ten years to install solar panels on multifamily affordable housing units, while directing the energy savings back to renters. AB 693 was one of 3 bills signed into law as part of package of bills that will directly benefit low-income communities and communities of color.

Governor Brown signed a suite of other important environmental justice bills, including AB 1288 (Pavley & Atkins), which adds two representatives who work directly with low-income communities and communities of color overburdened by pollution to the California Air Resources Board (ARB), and AB 1071 (Atkins) will create a policy that allows a percentage of penalty fines from environmental violations to be directed into projects that benefit environmental justice communities.

"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 ensure the California Air Resources Board performs more equitably and responds more effectively to issues in communities overburdened by pollution, increase resources to areas burdened by environmental violations, and provides low-income residents with opportunities to participate in the new solar economy."

"Solar power should be enjoyed by everyone in California, not just the wealthiest among us," said Assemblymember Susan Eggman (D-Stockton), author of AB 693. "This bill puts solar in the hands of those who most need the financial savings, creating a more equitable and inclusive clean energy future."

AB 693, which creates the new Multifamily Affordable Housing Solar Roofs program, will help ensure that low-income Californians are benefitting from California's growing renewable energy sector. There are approximately 5 million low-income ratepayers in the state of California. Many of these consumers live in rental housing, making it virtually impossible for them to directly benefit from the recent boom in rooftop solar.

"While low-income communities and communities of color have long been locked out of the economic and environmental benefits of renewable energy, AB 693 will bridge this green divide. It will infuse low-income communities with health and economic benefits by lowering utility bills and creating clean energy in some of the communities that have been most impacted by pollution," said Strela Cervas, Co-Director of [California Environmental Justice Alliance](#) (CEJA). "We thank Governor Brown and Assemblymember Eggman for their leadership in bringing equitable energy policy to the environmental justice community."

Miya Yoshitani, Executive Director of the [Asian Pacific Environmental Network](#) (APEN) said, "By signing SB 350, Governor Brown has ignited a renewable energy revolution in California, and we know that a just transition away from fossil fuels requires even more action. We applaud Governor Brown for advancing bold

climate policy that benefits all, including working families by signing AB 693 into law as well. AB 693, the Multifamily Affordable Housing Solar Roofs Program, will make sure our state reaches its new renewable energy goals by ensuring that families living in affordable housing can access these resources.”

The ground-breaking new program is the only one to direct the savings created through the use of solar energy directly back to the utility bills of renters; current programs only provide savings to building or home owners. The program is projected to reduce utility bills for 210,000 low-income housing units throughout the state.

The new program will also help California fight climate change and meet the state’s goals for reducing greenhouse gases. The program is expected to reduce emissions from electrical generation by up to 3 million tons.

“This program is a win-win for California,” explained Cervas. “It demonstrates that we can meet the challenge of climate change, create economic benefits for low-income residents, and ensure that our renewable energy future puts equity at the center.”

AB 693 was supported broadly by environmental justice organizations, low-income housing advocates, environmental groups, and solar companies.

The [California Environmental Justice Alliance](#) (CEJA), an alliance of grassroots environmental justice groups, was a key supporter for several environmental justice bills signed into law by the Governor this session. From increasing resources to areas burdened by environmental violations 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.

Environmental justice bills signed into law by Governor Brown in the 2015 session:

- [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 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).
- [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.
- [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.

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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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