



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE

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New Environmental Justice Legislative Scorecard Highlights Changing Nature of Environmental Policy

3rd Annual Scorecard Demonstrates Growing Power of Communities of Color

Sacramento, CA | January 25, 2016 — Today, a new analysis was released that takes a closer look at California legislators' voting record on environmental policy that impacts low-income communities and communities of color overburdened by pollution and poverty in the state. The [California Environmental Justice Alliance](#) (CEJA)'s [Environmental Justice Scorecard 2015](#) demonstrates the growing role that the health, quality of life and equity issues in communities of color play in environmental policy.

"People of color are the majority in California. Our 2015 Scorecard shows that environmental policy is being redefined. In order to be successful, environmental legislation must address the issues communities of color care about," said Sofia Parino, Senior Attorney at the [Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment](#).

CEJA's 3rd annual Environmental Justice Scorecard looks at the voting record of legislators on 15 different bills that made a contribution to advancing environmental justice. There was a significant increase in scores from CEJA's first scorecard in 2013, reflecting the growing power of community voices, and increased understanding among legislators about environmental justice issues. In 2015, 37 legislators received perfect scores, and overall more individual legislators scored in the 90-100 percent range in 2015 than in the past two years combined.

"The release of this year's Environmental Justice Scorecard comes on the heels of some amazing policy victories that are truly a testament to the growing power of the environmental justice movement. These policies are just the start of what our state must accomplish to address long-standing pollution burdens in low-income communities and communities of color," said Martha Arguello, Executive Director of [Physicians for Social Responsibility - Los Angeles](#). "In 2015, we saw historic partnerships between legislative leaders and communities across California to pass new equitable environmental policies that help fight climate change, reduce toxic exposures, diversify the California Air Resources Board, and create the largest solar program for low-income tenants in the state."

The 2015 Scorecard includes several new features. It analyzes how many legislative districts have highly impacted communities. Almost all Senate and Assembly districts have some portion of overburdened communities, as defined by the California Environmental Protection agency.

"There is an environmental health and justice crisis in California, and it is impacting almost every district in the state. Legislators can no longer say that this is not their issue; everyone must urgently take action," said Amy Vanderwarker, Co-Director of the [California Environmental Justice Alliance](#) and one of the lead authors of the 2015 Environmental Justice Scorecard.

The 2015 Scorecard also looks at the overlap between environmental justice communities and some members of the Moderate Democratic Caucus, specifically those who opposed inclusion of

an ambitious oil reduction section in 2015's landmark Renewable Portfolio Standard bill, SB 350. The map highlights how many of these Moderate Democrats represent communities on the frontlines of poverty and pollution, but succumbed to industry pressure.

"In 2015, we saw equity issues being used as a wedge to stop the adoption of important climate change measures," said Quentin Foster, Policy Advocate at the [California Environmental Justice Alliance](#). "We share frustrations with many legislators who feel that environmental policy has not historically benefitted communities of color, but this cannot be an excuse to side with industry. Health and quality of life issues cannot be used as a cover for legislators who are siding with industry, instead of supporting measures that would lead to direct improvements in these very communities."

Another feature of the Scorecard analyzes the overall scores of Asian Pacific Islander, Black, and Latino Caucuses, finding that legislators of color, especially members of these caucuses, have more work to do to align with the needs of low-income and communities of color that often helped get them elected.

While the Scorecard reflects significant new trends in environmental policy, Vanderwarker notes that there is still much work to be done in order for the victories and strong voting records of 2015 to translate into on-the-ground improvements in communities of color. "We are thrilled with the progress we have seen from our first scorecard in 2013 and our incredible victories in 2015, but we also know that with such a strong industry lobby and a powerful Moderate Caucus, we will have to work hard to see more forward progress for environmental justice in state policy."

For the full Environmental Justice Scorecard 2015: www.caleja.org/scorecard2015

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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