



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE

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Contact: Strela Cervas, (213) 284-4923

New Bills to Break Down Barriers to Renewable Energy

2017 Environmental Justice Legislative Agenda Features Bills to Expand Access to Renewable Energy, Reform State Agencies, Promote Transit Equity & Affordable Housing

Sacramento, CA | March 28, 2017 — California has some of the most aggressive climate and energy goals in the nation and new bills introduced this year can put us on track to meet those goals with equity at the center. AB 523 by Assemblymember Eloise Gomez-Reyes (D-Rialto) and SB 366 by Senator Connie M. Leyva (D-Chino) will build upon California's advancements in renewable energy by breaking down barriers for disadvantaged communities to access the benefits of affordable, clean energy. AB 523 and SB 366 are two priority bills co-sponsored by the California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA) featured in their [2017 Environmental Justice Legislative Agenda](#) released today, which features 17 bills that will benefit low-income communities and communities of color.

"Low-income families and communities of color are disproportionately impacted by the negative effects of the fossil fuel economy and have the most to gain from a just transition to affordable clean energy," said Diana Vazquez, Policy Advocate at the [California Environmental Justice Alliance](#). "This year, we must build upon California's advancements in renewable energy to close the green divide for our most vulnerable communities. After playing a key role in passing of SB 350 in 2015, which set our goal to hit 50% renewables by 2030, CEJA is proud to co-sponsor AB 523 and SB 366 which will help get us there."

AB 523 by Assemblymember Eloise Gomez Reyes will bring new investments to disadvantaged and low-income communities to access renewable energy by requiring the California Energy Commission to allocate at least 25% of the Electric Program Investment Charge Fund for technology demonstration and deployment at sites located in disadvantaged communities, and at least 10% in low-income communities.

"AB 523 ensures that renewable benefits are deployed in disadvantaged and low income communities" said Assemblymember Eloise Gomez Reyes, author of AB 523. "As chair of the Select Committee on Environmental Quality and the Green Economy in Inland Empire, It is critical to my mission that as the state deploys and develops renewable technology, no community is left behind."

"It is important that bills like AB 523 are put in place because low-income communities and communities of color should be first in line when it comes to innovation," said Anabel Marquez, a resident of Shafter and member of the [Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment](#). "It is time we invest in renewable energy in disadvantaged communities. Innovative laws like AB 523 will help us achieve clean energy."

SB 366 by Senator Connie Leyva will improve and provide an equity focus to the current Green Tariff Shared Renewables Program established by SB 43 passed in 2013, by expanding the number of available megawatts for renewable energy projects located in environmental justice communities. SB 366 will also enhance the program by increasing savings for low-income customers. This will incentivize community solar use by low-income customers by ensuring bill savings through existing utility sector greenhouse gas auction revenues.

"California is at the leading edge of the growing solar and clean energy movement but our current programs are not serving low income and working families," said Senator Connie M. Leyva (D-Chino) author of SB 366. "Building off of recommendations from the SB 350 Barriers Report I am proud to have introduced SB 366 earlier this year to ensure that everyone across the state can access the benefits of renewable energy and lower their electricity bills."

"SB 366 will help low-income families like mine access the benefits of solar that we urgently need," said Lipo Chanthanasak, a member of the [Asian Pacific Environmental Network](#), co-sponsor of SB 366. "Living in Richmond, a community that faces constant pollution from the Chevron Refinery, we need clean energy and we also need to reduce our energy bills. Many of us can't afford to put solar on our rooftop, but by passing bills like SB 366, all of us can benefit from the solar economy."

"Affordable solar power has the power to improve health and economic opportunity for everyone, especially disadvantaged families that are on the frontlines of fossil impacts," said Susannah Churchill, West Coast Director at [Vote Solar](#). "This bill would ensure that low-income communities are able to actively participate in and benefit from our growing solar market, and it would show the nation that California is ready and able to lead when it comes to building a stronger, healthier and more equitable clean energy economy. We thank Senator Leyva for her leadership."

Along with AB 523 and SB 366, CEJA's other priorities include:

- **Advance an equitable climate policy that ensures direct emission reductions.** We want to see California strengthen and better align existing climate and air quality regulations to meet our 2030 target for greenhouse gas reductions and increase economic benefits for EJ communities. We are working to ensure proposals such as AB 378 ensure environmental justice issues are included in any climate policies, and will be closely tracking this and other related proposals.
- **SUPPORT: SB 774 (Leyva)** will establish a 5-member governing board and an executive officer to exercise the adjudicatory and regulatory functions of the state in the field of hazardous substances. The purpose of the governing board is to provide effective, transparent, and accountable oversight of California's hazardous waste management and the remediation of contaminated sites, and to prevent threats associated with hazardous substances.

The California Environmental Justice Alliance's 2017 Environmental Justice Legislative Agenda features a diverse set of bills that will address climate change, promote equitable transportation planning and funding, ensure safe and affordable drinking water for all communities, require oil refineries to install air monitoring systems, fight for affordable housing, and defund the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline.

"The bills advancing transportation equity this year are a breath of fresh air for communities in the Inland Empire where hundreds of diesel trucks pass through every hour," said Michele Hasson, Policy Advocate at the [Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice](#). "By requiring seven voting members of the California Transportation Commission have expertise in public health, sustainable transit and environmental justice, AB 179 by Assemblymember Cervantes will ensure major decisions about transportation funding and projects that significantly impact the health of low-income communities and communities of color can be shaped by experts who represent environmental justice communities."

[Read CEJA's full 2017 Environmental Legislative Agenda here.](#)

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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.
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