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Poor deserve piece of solar energy pie, too

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When I walk through southeast Los Angeles, I see dozens of apartment buildings that could be transformed into hot spots of renewable energy generation. These affordable housing units – home to thousands of renters and with their large, flat roofs – have a huge untapped potential.

So I welcome Gov. Jerry Brown's signing Thursday of [Assembly Bill 693](#) by Assemblywoman Susan Talamantes Eggman, which will create the nation's single largest investment in solar for low-income renters in history. The Multifamily Affordable Housing Solar Roofs Program includes a dedicated funding source of \$100 million per year to install solar panels on multifamily affordable housing units, and would direct the savings back to low-income renters.

The governor [also just signed SB 350](#), which sets the benchmark for taking our renewable energy economy to the next level. With its new 50 percent renewable energy goal, SB 350 ensures California will continue as a nationwide leader. We need to build off this victory by directing renewable energy into low-income communities – those who have endured the most pollution, and those who will benefit the most from the renewable energy future SB 350 is creating.

AB 693 will bring local solar power to communities of color that are often last to benefit from green technologies. It reaches a large, underserved market of consumers who can most benefit from the savings. In addition, it will promote local jobs, renewable energy and cleaner air for California.



Low-income communities and communities of color have the highest rates of pollution and suffer from the highest rates of pollution-related illnesses such as asthma and cancer. These communities are also hardest hit by climate change. AB 693 will lower energy bills for almost 210,000 low-income units and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 3 million tons over 10 years.

We believe that this measure will be critical to bridging the green divide and ensure that all Californians benefit from the expansion of renewable energy.

Strela Cervas is co-director of the California Environmental Justice Alliance.

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