



2022 Environmental Justice Advocacy Priorities

As leaders and clergy from many faith traditions, we share the mandate to care for and protect all of creation, to love our neighbors, and care for the most vulnerable. Environmental Justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. All too often, environmental burdens disproportionately impact vulnerable populations, people of color, and low-income communities. We serve to educate and mobilize faith communities to advocate for environmental justice.

We support the NJ Green Amendment (ACR72/SCR15). This would Amend Article I of the NJ state constitution to include:

“Every person has a right to a clean and healthy environment, including pure water, clean air, and ecologically healthy habitats, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic, and esthetic qualities of the environment. The State shall not infringe upon these rights, by action or inaction.

The State’s public natural resources, among them its waters, air, flora, fauna, climate, and public lands, are the common property of all the people, including both present and future generations. The State shall serve as trustee of these resources, and shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all people.

This paragraph and the rights stated herein are self-executing, and shall be in addition to any rights conferred by the public trust doctrine or common law.”

The Assembly bill has bi-partisan support with 3 primary sponsors and 37 co-sponsors. The Senate bill has 2 primary sponsors and 17 co-sponsors.

Key provisions of the amendment:

- The amendment is **included in the Bill of Rights section** of the NJ Constitution.
- The amendment **secures individual rights** to pure water, clean air, ecologically healthy habitats, a stable climate, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic, and esthetic qualities of the environment
- The **State is the trustee** – this means that they shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all people. This language is important to **ensure environmental justice and generation protection**.
- The rights stated in a Green Amendment are **inherent, inalienable, infeasible, and self-executing**.

These features set the legal precedent for the protection of current and future generations’ rights and access to a clean and healthful environment.

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