



Environmental Justice

*Live in complete harmony with Nature,
Experience the grace of God in the splendour of the universe.
Be blessed by God's reassuring love,
The sweet dawn will sweeten your soul,
The dazzling mid-day will set your hearts aflutter,
And the serene music of your soul will guide you towards peace and prosperity.
And when the day's task is over, you will sleep in the lap of Mother Nature,
All the deities will be favourable to you.*

—Mother Nature, Yajur Veda (34.37)

“All who can protest against [something wrong that] one of their family [is doing], and does not protest, is held accountable for their family.[All who can protest against something wrong that] a citizen of their city [is doing and does not protest], is held accountable for all citizens of the city.[All who can protest against something wrong that is being done] in the whole world [and does not protest], is accountable together with all citizens of the world.”

— Shabbat 54b

And the servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk upon the earth lightly, and when the ignorant address them harshly, they say words of peace.

—Qur'an [25:63]

“We must treat nature with the same awe and wonder that we reserve for human beings. And we do not need this insight in order to believe in God or to prove his existence. We need it to breathe; we need it for us simply to be.”

—Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, 2010

“You, yourself created the Universe, and You are pleased... You, Yourself the bumblebee, flower, fruit and the tree.”

—Guru Granth Sahib, Maru Sohele, page 1020

As faith leaders and clergy across many faith traditions, we share the moral obligation 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 have disproportionately impacted vulnerable populations, people of color, and low-income communities. We serve to educate and mobilize faith communities to advocate for responsible environmental policy through a social justice lens.



2024 Environmental Justice Advocacy Priorities

Support dedicated funding for New Jersey Transit.

Governor Murphy's proposed budget includes the first-ever dedicated source of funding for NJ Transit via a 2.5 percent corporate transit fee on corporations with more than \$10million in annual profit. We support this important step while acknowledging that it alone is insufficient to address the dire need. Moreover, we are concerned by the proposed double digit fare hikes that will disproportionately impact riders who are low wage workers. A robust and adequately funded transit system is critical for addressing climate change but must be implemented in an equitable way that ensures affordable access to all.

Support the NJ Clean Energy Act of 2024 (A1480/S237).

This bill would establish 100 percent clean electricity standards for New Jersey. We advocate for genuine "clean" energy standards and oppose false climate solutions such as trash incinerators (which disproportionately impact marginalized communities) and technologies such as carbon capture, renewable natural gas, and hydrogen (which do not exist).

Bill Sponsors:

A1480—Robert J. Karabinchak (sponsor) and Verlina Reynolds-Jackson (co-sponsor)
S237—Bob Smith (sponsor) and Raj Mukherji (sponsor)

Prioritize "Green Job" development in underrepresented populations and communities

New Jersey's clean energy transition is expected to generate about 11,000 jobs annually. As Dr. Elizabeth Stanton, Director and Senior Economist of Applied Economic Clinic has said, the state must "require public policy to reduce employment barriers including bias against women and people of color, lack of childcare or transportation, and hiring practices that benefit friends and relatives of people already working in the field." As faith leaders committed to Environmental Justice, we advocate for policies that ensure such jobs target those communities that have borne a disproportionate burden from the impact of climate change.

Support the NJ Green Amendment (ACR119/SCR43). This proposed constitutional amendment would make the State of New Jersey trustee of public natural resources and guarantee to the people the right to clean air, clean water, and a healthy environment.

Bill Sponsors:

ACR 119— Verlina Reynolds-Jackson (sponsor), Benjie E. Wimberly (sponsor), William W. Spearman (sponsor), Herb Conaway Jr. (co-sponsor), and Garnet R. Hall (co-sponsor)

SCR 43— Linda R. Greenstein (sponsor) and Andrew Zwicker (sponsor). Joseph F. Vitale, (co-sponsor), Nilsa I. Cruz-Perez (co-sponsor), Patrick J. Diegnan, Jr. (co-sponsor), Shirley K. Turner (co-sponsor), Vin Gopal (co-sponsor), Robert W. Singer (co-sponsor), M. Teresa Ruiz (co-sponsor), Joseph A. Lagana (co-sponsor), Jon M. Bramnick (co-sponsor), Gordon M. Johnson (co-sponsor), Nellie Pou (co-sponsor), Renee C. Burgess (co-sponsor), John F. McKeon (co-sponsor), Angela V. McKnight (co-sponsor), Raj Mukherji (co-sponsor), and Britnee N. Timberlake (co-sponsor).
