



Environmental Justice Leadership Forum on  
Climate Change

## CLIMATE JUSTICE ALIGNMENT (CJA)



February 9, 2013

The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

The National Environmental Justice Leadership Forum on Climate Change, Climate Justice Alignment, the Indigenous Environmental Network, along with allied environmental justice and environmental organizations, advocates, Indigenous peoples and community leaders congratulate you on your re-election.

We also thank Administrator Lisa Jackson for her service over the past four years her leadership in achieving a broader awareness and recognition, by the Agency, of the importance of environmental justice and human health.

As communities we have dedicated our lives to creating healthy environmental and economic opportunities for all our communities. We now call on you to join with us to pursue a strong and comprehensive environmental program – a program that could simultaneously address climate change, protect community health, create meaningful work, *and* reduce the pervasive racial inequality that continues to plague our nation. This means that Environmental Justice (EJ) *must* be, at the center of the EPA's policy agenda.

Our economy's recovery is too slow for our most vulnerable, who have been the last to see positive change. Our global environment is at greater risk than ever before and the consequences are only getting worse. Racial and wealth inequality continue to erode the very fabric of our democracy and environment.

Therefore we call upon you to:

1) *Establish your environmental justice policies on the following principles:*

- Reducing and eliminating the cumulative impacts of environmental problems, and social injustice;
- Obtaining the free, prior and informed consent of communities before permitting potentially damaging projects;
- Recognizing the rights of future generations and the responsibilities of present generations to future generations in all environmental decisions;
- Using a precautionary approach in environmental justice decisions and acting to prevent harm in the face of scientific uncertainty.

2) *Nominate an EPA Administrator who will:*

- **Have a proficient understanding, knowledge and commitment to the issues and conditions of EJ communities;** and to the continued integration of environmental justice into all EPA programs and agendas, including research, regulation, permitting and enforcement programs.
- **Prioritize the integration of EJ** in cross-agency, cross-departmental initiatives to ensure effective investments in over-burdened and over-polluted communities.
- **Pledge to engage the Department of Energy and other public agencies to work with EJ communities** – at local, state, tribal and federal levels – particularly around issues of harmful waste, oil and gas, metallic and hard rock sulfide, coal and uranium mining industries; the reduction of their greenhouse gas and toxic emissions; and, the construction of alternative green infrastructure.
- **Have a strong commitment to addressing climate change and community health,** through regulations that ramp down all industrial sources of greenhouse gas emissions as well as toxic co-pollutants;
- **Work to implement an economic stimulus program and a Clean Energy Works project administration,** that would train and put people to work to restore our nature ecosystems; reduce cumulative impacts, build water conservation projects; establish local and community-based energy projects; and, commence zero waste programs and public transportation projects. We need federal investment in these public sector jobs to restore and revive our natural and human resource base at the local and regional levels.
- **Strengthen enforcement of Title VI and the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts,** with special attention to poor communities, tribal and communities of color and with remedies that send a clear message that polluting our children's bodies will not be tolerated in the name of economic progress.

- **Reject the TransCanada Keystone XL Pipeline and the Enbridge Alberta Clipper Line 67 pipeline expansions** that undermine U.S. commitment to a clean sustainable energy future. Importing 80% of the Alberta Canada tar/oil sands crude oil to the U.S. encourages unprecedented ecological and human health destruction in Canadian indigenous communities and dependence on one of the dirtiest and carbon intensive fossil fuel known. Initiate a federal time-out on the proposed offshore development within the Outer Continental Shelf areas of the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas of Alaska. Oil drilling in sensitive Arctic regions, threatens Alaska Natives' way of life, and perpetuates the nation's addiction to oil and increasing GHG emissions.
- **Reject the development of nonconventional fuels** including oil shale, liquid coal, ultra-heavy oils and other ultra-deep off shore deposits while protecting our public lands and waters from short-sighted extraction, drilling and exploration. This includes refinery expansions and other infrastructure build-outs of the expansion of these bottom-of-the barrel fuels that emit higher levels of greenhouse gases and creates ecological devastation.
- **End support for the landfilling and incineration of waste, tires, biomass and gasification technologies and sewage sludge** – all industries that are more carbon-intensive and toxic than coal power.
- **End support for hydraulic fracturing and other natural gas projects** that pollute and prolong the destruction of our environment and community health.
- **Maintain critical funding for community sustainability programs** through the EPA (e.g. the CARE program), DOE (e.g. LIHEAP), HUD (e.g. Partnership for Sustainable Communities), the Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) Initiative, and many others that build community capacity, community health and community pride. Develop rigorous rules and programs to truly fulfill the spirit of the Environmental Justice Executive Order.

We believe that the time is ripe to develop innovative environmental justice approaches such as creating new institutions and using new regulatory tools. One such new institution would be a guardian (or ombudsman) of future generations and nature. The guardian could do things like review all regulations for their impact on future generations. New regulatory tools include Alternatives Assessment and Health Impacts Assessments.

With these policy directions, we know that your presidential legacy can change this country for the better. With these actions *and* our hard work, together we can move this nation forward in its most important peacetime endeavor – saving our planet, putting our people to work, and reducing inequality. The environmental justice community, Indigenous Peoples’ and communities of color, and a broad sector of our population stand ready to engage with you in this endeavor. As a point of information, we will be also sending our suggested list of potential EPA candidates for Administrator to the Office of Personnel Management.

We would appreciate the opportunity to speak with members of your advisory team on environmental and environmental justice issues, particularly **Ms. Heather Zichal and Ms. Valerie Jarrett** in the near future before these and other critical leadership decisions are made.

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you our concerns and we look forward to having a conversation, in person, within the next couple of weeks. Please feel free to have a member of your staff contact me directly to schedule a meeting time. I can be reached at (202)495-3036 or [jalonne@weact.org](mailto:jalonne@weact.org).

With kind regards,

Dr. Cecilia Martinez, Climate Justice Alignment  
Mr. Tom Goldtooth, Indigenous Environmental Network  
Dr. Jalonne L. White-Newsome, West Harlem Environmental Action, Inc. (WE ACT)

*And* all the members of the Climate Justice Alliance, the Environmental Justice Leadership Forum on Climate Change and the Indigenous Environmental Network

**Cc:**

**Ms. Heather Zichal**  
**Ms. Valerie Jarrett**  
**Mr. Rohan Patel**  
**Mr. Kevin Samy**  
**Ms. Nancy Sutley**  
**Sen. Barbara Boxer**  
**Senate Environment and Public Works Committee**  
**Congressional Black Caucus**  
**Congressional Hispanic Caucus**  
**Congressional Asian American and Pacific Islander Conference**  
**Congressional Progressive Caucus**  
**Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition**