

Headline: Info drive: California climate change law a boon to poor communities

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Denny Sysaknoi found a job in the surging clean energy sector. PHOTO BY LEXEY SWALL

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BERKELEY, California – California's climate change and clean energy laws not only fight smog and promote health, but also bring jobs and consumer savings to communities of color and low-income neighborhoods.

That's message of a new information drive launched December 15 by the Greenlining Institute to counter misinformation from the oil industry.

"The oil industry and its front groups have shamelessly tried to mislead communities of color about California's laws to fight global warming, masquerading as consumer advocates when all they want is to protect their own profits," said Greenlining Institute Executive Director Orson Aguilar.

"We're going to make sure our communities hear the truth."

The centerpiece of the campaign is a just-launched website, UpLiftCA.org, with the tagline, "Our Air. Our Jobs. Our Neighborhoods."

At the heart of UpLiftCA.org are stories of real Californians already benefitting from the state's exploding clean energy economy.

They are people like 21-year-old Denny Sisaknoi of Fresno, who escaped a slide into crime and gang involvement (his brother has been in prison since age 15) and built a new life and career as a solar installer, and the Ramirezes, a low-income Madera family that recently got solar power.

The story bank will grow over the coming months, and a Spanish language version of the site will launch in January.

As mandated by AB 32, California's climate change and clean energy law, and follow-up legislation called SB 535, one quarter of the money raised by sales of carbon permits under California's cap-and-trade program must go to projects that benefit highly polluted and poor communities.

For the current fiscal year that amounts to \$272 million for priorities such as clean energy, energy efficiency, clean transportation, urban forestry and affordable housing near public transit.

"California is doing something incredibly forward-thinking," said Leonard Robinson, chair of the California Black Chamber of Commerce Energy and Environment Committee and former chief deputy director of the Cal/EPA Department of Toxic Substances in the Schwarzenegger administration.

"Part of the fees that companies are charged for putting greenhouse gases into the air are being invested in California's most vulnerable and underserved communities to improve health and create

local jobs. These jobs are real – California added over 3,500 solar power jobs last year alone,” added Robinson.

More jobs will be coming soon as funding begins to flow. Just before Thanksgiving, the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) announced a series of grants to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from solid waste disposal, projects that will bring new jobs and cleaner air to places like Perris, Oakland, Tulare and Fresno.

In addition to real-world stories of clean energy policy in action, UpLiftCA.org features clear, plain-English explanations of how the laws work and how they will cut smog, protect health and generate jobs as they fight global warming.

It also includes practical information for individuals and business owners seeking assistance and information regarding energy efficiency, low-cost solar power, rebates for plug-in electric vehicles and much more.

“For too many decades, low income neighborhoods and communities of color were used as toxic dumping grounds,” said Greenlining Environmental Equity Director Vien Truong.

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“This is a huge chance to right a historical wrong and bring real benefits to our communities, and community advocates are working closely with the state to make sure these benefits are real and get to where they need to go,” Truong added.