

## Letter: Encourage President Obama to tackle Environmental Justice issues in his Climate Action Plan

Dear Colleague,

Please join us in sending a letter to President Obama, urging him to explicitly address environmental justice concerns in his Climate Action Plan (CAP).

The CAP aims to address the worst impacts of climate change by decreasing carbon pollution and preparing for climate impacts, but only mentions environmental justice once. Low-income, tribal, and minority communities around the country are disproportionately burdened by environmental degradation. In addition, disadvantaged communities are more vulnerable to climate impacts due to inadequate infrastructure, limited access to healthcare, and higher risk factors for heat and pollution-related diseases.

In addition to this letter, we have introduced a resolution (HRES 479) marking the anniversary of the Executive Order, and detailing the current state of environmental injustice in the United States. We hope you will also co-sponsor this resolution.

To cosign this letter or cosponsor the resolution, please contact Anne Christianson (Ellison) at [anne.christianson@mail.house.gov](mailto:anne.christianson@mail.house.gov), or 5-4755, by **noon, February 26<sup>th</sup>**.

Sincerely,

Keith Ellison  
Member of Congress

Raúl Grijalva  
Member of Congress

\* \* \* \*

February X, 2014

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear President Obama,

Thank you for taking steps in the Climate Action Plan (CAP) to cut carbon pollution, prepare for climate impacts, and lead international efforts to address global warming. As this February marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, we write to request that the CAP

explicitly address the unique environmental justice concerns of low-income, minority, indigenous, and Native American communities across the country.

Poverty, and in particular race, are directly correlated with greater exposure to toxics from pollution sources such as highways, waste disposal sites, and coal-fired power plants that are disproportionately sited near low-income, tribal, and racially segregated communities. Combined with factors like crime, substandard housing, and poor nutrition, the cumulative impacts of social inequalities and environmental injustices have led to major health disparities across the country.

Climate change compounds existing inequities. Droughts, floods, wildfires, and extreme weather events increase the vulnerability of people living in areas with limited climate resiliency – communities with poor air quality, unsafe housing, and insufficient resources to plan, prepare and recover from extreme weather. The health implications of climate change – including heat stress, the introduction of infectious diseases to unexposed communities, and the asthma, cardiac, and other chronic diseases associated with poor air quality – are particularly damaging.

The implementation of the CAP provides an opportunity to address these environmental justice concerns. As you work to reduce carbon and co-pollutants, we urge you to address cumulative impacts and protect already overburdened communities from new pollution sources. Similarly, we believe that actions taken to build climate resiliency around the country should focus on increasing the resource capacity of vulnerable communities unprepared to cope with the devastating effects of global warming. For these communities, climate change is as much an economic and public health issue as an environmental issue. The CAP gives our nation a chance to create jobs in industries like clean energy, energy efficiency, and green infrastructure that help communities adapt and survive climate change.

The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Executive Order 12898 is an opportunity to commit to addressing environmental justice in the CAP, and to engage with the environmental justice community and Congress throughout the CAP implementation process. We stand ready to help.

Sincerely,

---

Keith Ellison  
Member of Congress

---

Raúl Grijalva  
Member of Congress