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(Original Signature of Member)

113TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. _____

Recognizing the 20th anniversary of the Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. ELLISON submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on _____

RESOLUTION

Recognizing the 20th anniversary of the Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations.

Whereas environmental justice is defined as 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”;

Whereas environmental justice principles assume that no group of people should be disproportionately impacted by

the negative environmental consequences of government policies, energy production, and industry;

Whereas environmental justice means that all citizens should have to right and opportunity to participate in decisions and policymaking that affects their health;

Whereas environmental justice is characterized by the promotion of unprejudiced treatment of all cultures, socioeconomic statuses, and races, with respect to the advancement of environmental policies, regulations, and law;

Whereas the protest against the siting of a chemical landfill in Warren County, North Carolina, led by local community leaders and national civil rights groups, birthed the term “environmental racism” and brought national attention to the environmental justice movement;

Whereas the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991 drafted and adopted 17 environmental justice principles, which served as a defining document for the grassroots environmental justice movement;

Whereas the Congressional Black Caucus promoted the formation of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)’s Environmental Equity Workgroup in 1992 to investigate the concerns that minority and low-income populations were inadequately protected by the Nation’s environmental laws, leading to the creation of the EPA’s Office of Environmental Justice in 1992;

Whereas on February 11, 1994, President William J. Clinton declared that each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission;

Whereas the executive order instructs each Federal agency to determine the injurious effects of its actions on minority and low-income communities, and devote attention to resolving these issues;

Whereas the aim of the environmental justice executive order is to increase access to public information and participation for minority and low-income populations, and encourage nondiscrimination in Federal programs that impact the environment and human health;

Whereas fair and responsible environmental health policies and practices are critical to improve the lives of those who live in low-income communities and communities of color throughout the United States and the world;

Whereas inequalities in environmental protection based on race and income status are recognized across the United States;

Whereas income and race are directly correlated to greater exposure to pollution, more toxic pollution sources, and greater health impacts from particulate matter air pollution;

Whereas African-Americans, Hispanics, and Asians are exposed to greater air toxic concentrations than Whites in every metropolitan city in the United States;

Whereas communities with a higher percentage of poor citizens bear a disproportionate level of society's environmental burdens;

Whereas one's race, independent of poverty, is correlated to a greater exposure to environmental toxins;

Whereas minority, low-income, and tribal communities are more exposed to air pollution based on siting of high-

ways, power plants, incinerators, landfills, waste sites, and vehicle depots, in these communities;

Whereas 68 percent of African-Americans and 39 percent of Latinos live within 30 miles of a coal plant;

Whereas tribal communities are disproportionately exposed to pollution and health burdens across the United States due to siting of pollution sources, cultural activities, and legal gaps in the regulatory framework;

Whereas environmental mitigation in tribal communities is behind that of nontribal communities in the United States;

Whereas inner-city, low income, and minority children have the highest asthma rates and subsequent asthma-related death rates resulting from greater exposure to indoor and outdoor air pollutants;

Whereas in the 1970s and 1980s, the United States Commission on Civil Rights found that Latinos, African-Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and other communities of color, as well as low-income communities, were more susceptible to health and environmental hazards than the rest of society;

Whereas cumulative effects such as substandard housing and inadequate health care can increase vulnerability to pollution;

Whereas climate change is the one of the biggest public health threats of this century, disproportionately impacting environmental justice communities less likely to recover from extreme weather events exacerbated by climate change;

Whereas low income communities and communities of color have greater climate vulnerability due to lack of health

care, dependence on public transportation and other public services, higher energy costs, less-than-adequate protection from severe weather, and higher insurance costs;

Whereas risk factors for heat-related deaths are higher for low income and people of color, and climate change will lead to an increase in frequency and intensity of heat waves, and a stronger heat island effect;

Whereas the environmental justice movement is an extension of the civil rights movement, and draws particular attention to the environmental health dangers affecting communities, families, and individuals;

Whereas environmental justice groups work to create public policy that is ethical, secure the strict enforcement of laws for environmental protection, and guarantee the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment;

Whereas environmental justice communities fight to ensure the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making, and promote the education of present and future generations to ensure the health of the natural world; and

Whereas community-based organizations and grassroots advocates have distinguished themselves in the endeavor for civil rights, sometimes risking their health and sacrificing their lives to seek justice: Now, therefore, be it

- 1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—
- 2 (1) recognizes the importance of the Executive
- 3 Order 12898 in bringing Federal attention to envi-
- 4 ronmental justice issues;

1 (2) recognizes that the laws passed by Congress
2 have a direct impact on the health and well-being of
3 all United States citizens;

4 (3) recognizes that extreme disparities in envi-
5 ronmental health persist between socioeconomic
6 statuses and racial communities;

7 (4) affirms that legislation passed by Congress
8 should not violate human or environmental rights,
9 should not negatively impact public health, and
10 should not further exacerbate existing health dispari-
11 ties among communities;

12 (5) reaffirms that the principles of environ-
13 mental and climate justice must be upheld;

14 (6) recommits to pursuing policies and practices
15 that protect the health and economic vitality of low-
16 income and communities of color;

17 (7) commemorates the achievements of the en-
18 vironmental justice movement over the last 20 years,
19 including—

20 (A) the institution of an environmental jus-
21 tice law, executive order, or policy by the 50
22 States and the District of Columbia;

23 (B) the reinstatement of the Federal Inter-
24 agency Working Group, Federal agency stra-
25 tegic plans, and Plan EJ 2014;

1 (C) the growth in the number of publica-
2 tions, research, and university-based environ-
3 mental justice centers, legal clinics, and aca-
4 demic programs; and

5 (D) the over 3,000 groups and a dozen
6 networks that have formed; and

7 (8) urges the President to—

8 (A) explicitly address environmental justice
9 issues in his climate change initiatives;

10 (B) commit to focusing on greater over-
11 sight and supporting Federal agency advance-
12 ment of environmental justice;

13 (C) work with tribal leaders and commu-
14 nities to address their unique environmental
15 justice concerns; and

16 (D) take significant steps towards reducing
17 the environmental burden placed on low-income,
18 minority, and tribal communities.