

PATH-BREAKING POLICIES

In February 2004, former NJ Governor Jim McGreevey signed the state's first Environmental Justice (EJ) Executive Order after years of advocacy by WEC and other EJ activists. Under the Executive Order, state agencies must consider the health and environmental impacts of their decision-making on people of color and poor communities. Also, a multi-state EJ Task Force was created. As a result of all this work, communities now have a greater role in environmental decision-making.



Former New Jersey Governor Jim McGreevey signs the state's landmark Environmental Justice Executive Order.

Partly due to the training and outreach undertaken by WEC, many communities are using the Executive Order. They have filed petitions with the DEP, and are working with DEP staff and EJ Task Force to develop action plans to remedy current problems and prevent future pollution.

Each petition includes at least 50 signatures from residents and/or workers, 25 of which are from adults who live in the petitioning communities. The petitions also must explain why these communities qualify as "disproportionately-impacted minority or low-income" and contain a description of the problem.

"All communities are not created equal. If a community happens to be poor, black or located on the 'wrong side of the tracks,' it receives less protection than affluent white suburbs."

Dr. Robert Bullard, Director
Environmental Justice Resource Center
Clark Atlanta University

WEC Can Help

The New Jersey Work Environment Council (WEC) is an alliance of labor, community, and environmental organizations working together for safe, secure jobs, and a healthy, sustainable environment. WEC links workers, communities, and environmentalists through training, technical assistance, grassroots organizing, and public policy campaigns to promote dialogue, collaboration, and joint action.

Don't Wait. Contact us now for help in your community or to get involved:

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USW Local 149
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ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

A Program of the NJ Work Environment Council (WEC)



Safe, Secure Jobs, and
a Healthy, Sustainable
Environment

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What is ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE?

Many people of color, low-income and working-class people live in communities where they are exposed to a disproportionate share of pollution. This is often referred to as “environmental racism” and “economic injustice.”

The Environmental Justice (EJ) Movement has its roots in the Civil Rights Movement and the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color or national origin. Many studies since then conclude that race and income are primary factors in determining industrial zoning, siting of polluting facilities, and where contaminated sites are cleaned up.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines environmental justice as “fair treatment.” This means that “...no group of people, including racial, ethnic or socioeconomic group, should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences” of industrial and commercial operations or governmental programs and policies.



Paterson Mayor Jose Torres points out pollution hot spots prior to a "Toxic Tour" of the city co-sponsored by WEC.

WEC'S PROGRAM

WEC's Environmental Justice Program seeks to eliminate and prevent unfair pollution burdens on people of color and low-income communities. The program advocates for meaningful participation by communities and workers in environmental decision-making — and for fair treatment and equal protection under governmental laws, policies and practices.



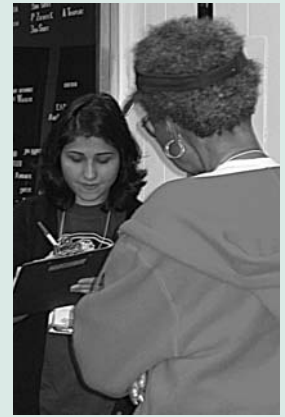
Working with Labor

WEC works closely with many local unions and with the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and its CARAT Team (Community Action and Response Against Toxics). WEC provides workshops and speakers on environmental justice issues for labor audiences — and involves WEC's labor partners in state policy advocacy, educational programs and in efforts to prevent local hazards. WEC worked with labor to win a Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Administrative Order. The Administrative Order allows workers and union representatives to participate in investigations of facilities that use extremely hazardous chemicals. This will help protect both workers and communities from toxic dangers.

Building Alliances

WEC works with communities by supporting local environmental justice activities, and by providing

organizing and technical assistance. WEC helped launch the New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance (NJEJA), a growing statewide coalition of environmental justice activists and organizations. The alliance includes an active Diesel Committee, which helps educate the public and elected officials about adverse health effects from diesel emissions and promotes actions to prevent diesel pollution. WEC has conducted door-to-door emergency response and preparedness surveys in communities located near polluting facilities.



WEC uses community surveys to assess public awareness about toxins and to document exposures.

Fighting Environmental Racism & Economic Injustice

WEC contends that the often striking differences in environmental quality between poor neighborhoods and communities of color, and wealthy areas result from institutional racism and economic disparities. The roots of these inequities are deep and difficult to eliminate. But WEC is working with all of our constituents to identify and combat these harmful forms of discrimination and power imbalances.



**NJ WORK
ENVIRONMENT
COUNCIL**

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