

EQUITABLE & JUST NATIONAL CLIMATE PLATFORM

July 30, 2024

The Honorable Joe Manchin
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Barrasso
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Manchin and Ranking Member Barrasso,

We are a group of environmental and environmental justice (EJ) organizations focused on centering environmental justice in federal climate policy. We have advocated collectively for the equitable implementation of billions of dollars of investments in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) for key environmental justice programs. On behalf of environmental justice communities we represent from across the country, we express deep concern over the Energy Permitting Reform Act of 2024 and similar energy permitting proposals, that undermine the environmental justice provisions in the IRA¹ and serve as giveaways to the fossil fuel industry.

We strongly oppose any effort to further expand oil, gas lease sales, undermine the Biden administration's pause on liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports, loosen oversight of drilling and mining projects, and curtail the public's ability to challenge harmful energy projects. Harmful energy permitting proposals will exacerbate environmental burdens² and public health risks for communities by making it easier for the fossil-fuel industry to site polluting projects in our communities and to perpetuate the industry's practice of concentrating destructive projects in communities of color and low-income communities.

We support clean, renewable, transmission infrastructure that is needed to achieve climate goals and combat fossil-fuel reliance. Communities must not be sacrificed in the process. Policy makers should focus instead on passing legislation such as the A. Donald McEachin Environmental Justice for All Act³,

¹Kelly, C., Roberts, M., & Chang, R. (2024). Securing environmental justice for all. <https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/03/Securing-Environmental-Justice-for-All.pdf>

² Thind, M. P. S., Tessum, C. W., Azevedo, I. L., & Marshall, J. D. (2019). Fine Particulate Air Pollution from Electricity Generation in the US: Health Impacts by Race, Income, and Geography. *Environmental Science & Technology*, 53(23), 14010–14019. <https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.est.9b02527>

³ A. Donald McEachin Environmental Justice for All Act, S.919, 118th Congress (2023-2024).

which clarifies how agencies consider and address the cumulative, and often disproportionate⁴, impacts from project development in communities of color and low-income communities. An equitable and just buildout of clean energy infrastructure should not add additional burdens to communities who are already overburdened by cumulative impacts. To this end, it must incorporate adequate environmental and social impacts review processes, meaningful and substantive participation from affected communities, and honor a communities' right to refuse the siting of harmful projects. This will ensure that projects proceed not just efficiently, but equitably, in the communities where they matter most.

Sincerely,

Center for Earth Energy & Democracy (CEED)
Deep South Center for Environmental Justice
Earthjustice
East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice
Environmental Justice Health Alliance
Green Door Initiative
Kean University
Natural Resource Defense Council
New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance
League of Conservation Voters
Los Jardines Institute
Regenesis Institute
Sierra Club
The Harambee House, Inc / Citizens of Environmental Justice
The New School - Tishman Environment and Design Center
Union of Concerned Scientists
WE ACT for Environmental Justice

Cc: John Podesta, Senior Advisor to the President for International Climate Policy
Honorable Charles E. Schumer Majority Leader United States Senate
Honorable Mitch McConnell Minority Leader United States Senate

⁴ Center, T. (2022, September 28). Understanding the evolution of 'Cumulative Impacts' definitions and policies in the US— Tishman Environment and Design Center. Tishman Environment and Design Center. <https://www.tishmancenter.org/blog/new-research-understanding-the-evolution-of-cumulative-impacts-definitions-and-policies-in-the-us>