



Overview

Both in the U.S. and worldwide, individuals and communities that contributed the least to the climate crisis will face the greatest impacts. Because climate change amplifies existing injustices, policies to address climate change should be designed to mitigate inequality and disproportionate impacts. To advance climate justice, state legislation needs to identify and center environmental justice communities, build an inclusive economy, support community-driven solutions, require local pollution reductions, and facilitate a just transition.

CLIMATE JUSTICE TERMS DEFINED

- **Climate Justice** “while used in different ways in different contexts by different communities, generally includes three principles: distributive justice which refers to the allocation of burdens and benefits among individuals, nations and generations; procedural justice which refers to who decides and participates in decision-making; and recognition which entails basic respect and robust engagement with and fair consideration of diverse cultures and perspectives.” - [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#)
- **Climate Injustice** “relates to how the impacts of climate change will be felt differently by different groups and how some people and places will be more vulnerable than others to these impacts. But vulnerability is not innate to some groups – it is determined by a mix of socio-economic, environmental and cultural factors and institutional practices such as planning rules and housing policy as well as people’s own capability to respond.” - [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#)
- **Just Transition** is the concept that as the economy moves from being fossil fuel-based to being clean energy-based, former fossil fuel workers and communities are not left without any support. Economic transitions can be disorganized and disruptive or they can be intentional and pro-worker; proponents of a just transition advocate for policies that will provide economic replacement for fossil fuel communities and ensure that clean energy jobs are good jobs. - [Institute for Human Rights and Business](#)

Policy Strategies ^(*** indicates bipartisan support)

Identify and Center Environmental Justice Communities

- **Vermont S.148 (2022)**: Established an environmental justice policy for the state; required state agencies to incorporate environmental justice into their work, rules, and procedures; established the Environmental Justice Advisory Council and the Interagency Environmental Justice Committee to advise the State on environmental justice issues.
- **Maine L.D. 2018 (2022)**: Established definitions for “environmental justice” and “front line communities;” set methods to incorporate the weighing of equity decisions in deliberations at the state’s Department of Environmental Protection and the Public Utilities Commission.
- **Washington S.B.5141 (2021)**: Required an environmental justice assessment of proposed and historic environment bills; created an EJ Council that supports integrating EJ into state government; sets a goal for agencies to allocate 35% of their budgets to serving the communities most impacted by environmental degradation.
- **New York S.6599 (2019)**: Required that disadvantaged communities must receive no less than 35% of overall benefits from the state’s climate programs; created the Climate Justice Working Group.



Building an Inclusive Economy

- **[**Connecticut S.B.999 \(2021\)](#)**: Set guidelines and requirements for renewable energy projects to incorporate community benefit agreements, apprenticeship programs, prevailing wage, and project labor agreements.
- **[Washington S.B.5116 \(2019\)](#)**: Created tiered tax incentives for clean energy projects based on job quality.
- **[Maryland S.B.516 \(2019\)](#)**: Appropriated \$7 million in clean energy funding specifically for small, minority, women-owned, and veteran-owned clean energy businesses; offers grants to clean energy employers that sponsor registered apprentices and utilize Project Labor Agreements (PLAs).

Prioritize Community-Driven Solutions

- **[**Washington H.B.1753 \(2022\)](#)**: Required early, meaningful, and individual consultation with any affected federally recognized tribe on all Climate Commitment Act funding decisions and funding programs that may impact tribal resources.
- **[**West Virginia H.B.4479 \(2022\)](#)**: Established the Coalfield Communities Grant Facilitation Commission, which provides support to small towns for grant writing and matching grant funds, particularly focusing on retraining coal miners.

Require Local Pollution Reductions

- **[Maryland H.B.1200 \(2022\)](#)**: Required a person applying for a certain permit from the Department of the Environment to include in the application the EJ Score from the Maryland EJ tool for the census tract where the applicant is seeking the permit.
- **[Washington S.B.5126 \(2021\)](#)**: Required improved air quality in communities disproportionately overburdened by pollution and directed a minimum of 35% of carbon pricing revenues to such communities.
- **[New Jersey A.2212/S.232 \(2020\)](#)**: Required DEP to evaluate environmental and public health stressor of certain facilities on overburdened communities when reviewing certain permit applications.

Facilitate a Just Transition

- **[New Hampshire S.B.152 \(2023\)](#)**: Establishes a marine trades career workforce development fund; establishes an offshore wind industry workforce training center committee.
- **[**New York S.9422 \(2022\)](#)**: Promoted the development of thermal energy networks and provided jobs to transitioning utility workers who are at risk of losing their employment.
- **[**Illinois S.B.2132/H.B.3624 \(2021\)](#)**: Invested up to \$40 million per year to replace lost property taxes, and support job training; created a “bill of rights” for displaced workers.
- **[Colorado H.B.19-1314 \(2019\)](#)**: Created a Just Transition Office in the Department of Labor and Employment. The final just transition action plan as submitted to the legislature is [available here](#).





Additional Resources

- Guide to Equitable, Community-Driven Climate Preparedness Planning ([Urban Sustainability Directors Network](#))
- Making Equity Real in Climate Adaptation and Community Resilience Policies and Programs ([Georgetown Climate Center](#))
- Solutions Library ([Just Solutions Network](#))
- State-Based Policies to Build a Cleaner, Safer, More Equitable Economy ([Blue Green Alliance](#))
- Tools to Help Plan For and Fund a Just & Equitable Transition From Fossil Fuel Power Plants and Mining ([Just and Equitable Transition Coalition](#))

