

**NEW JERSEY LEAGUE
OF CONSERVATION
VOTERS**

**COMMON
AGENDA FOR THE
ENVIRONMENT**

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WHAT IS NEW JERSEY LCV'S COMMON AGENDA?

Each legislative session, New Jersey LCV, as the convenor and political voice for the environment in New Jersey, brings together a diverse group of advocates and surveys its members to form our Common Agenda for the Environment. This legislative agenda reflects shared policy priorities of what the environmental community wants to see prioritized during a specific legislative session.

The priorities included in our 2022 Common Agenda emerged from New Jersey LCVEF's Green in '21: Environmental Policy Guide. The Guide, released in August of 2021, was developed by drawing on the expertise of over twenty-five partner organizations -- including environmental, justice, community-based, health, student, and civil rights groups -- this broad and holistic educational compendium illustrates environmental, public health issues and equity challenges facing New Jersey and our communities, as well as the opportunities that lie ahead. This incredible educational document is centered on four themes; 8 sections; 77 white papers; 140-pages; and 371-recommendations. At the center of each topic discussed are equity, justice, public health, and jobs.

The legislative priorities in the Common Agenda for the Environment and its sister document, the Governor Murphy Executive Agenda, were distilled from the recommendations featured in the Guide. As the name suggests, the Governor Murphy Executive Agenda outlines all of the recommendations made to the Governor and his administration. The Common Agenda prioritizes five of the Guide's legislative recommendations that New Jersey LCV will prioritize during the current 220th Legislative Session with our partners and pro-conservation champions in the New Jersey Legislature.

This Common Agenda was assembled with the input and guidance of over 20 partner organizations, the New Jersey LCV and New Jersey LCV Education Fund Board, the New Jersey LCV Policy Committee, and over 150 members.

NEW JERSEY LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS A RECORD OF SUCCESS

During the 219th (2020-2021) Legislative Session, New Jersey LCV passed all five of our Common Agenda for the Environment legislative priorities in bipartisan votes.



1 — UPDATED APPLIANCE STANDARDS BILL

Considered the “best energy, water, climate policy you’ve never heard of,” appliance efficiency standards remove less-efficient versions of products from the market, yielding massive water, energy, and cost savings - \$130 million annually.



2 — ELECTRIC VEHICLE BILL

This ambitious, nation-leading legislation required New Jersey Transit to electrify their bus fleet by nearly 2040 and created a rebate program to incentivize the purchase of EVs. This means cleaner air for all New Jerseyans, especially our most overburdened communities.



3 — CUMULATIVE IMPACTS BILL

A first-of-its-kind new comprehensive environmental justice law that seeks to limit pollution in overburdened communities. We congratulate the environmental justice advocates that led the charge for over a decade on this public health equity issue.



4 — SAVE THE BEES BILL

This bill will restrict most outdoor uses of neonicotinoid insecticides, which are directly associated with the massive bee and pollinator collapses we are experiencing.



5 — SINGLE-USE PLASTIC BAG BAN

The Plastic Pollution Reduction Act bans most plastic and paper bags and polystyrene food containers. This bill will reduce the 4.4 billion single-use plastic and 1,300 football fields of trees worth of paper bags that New Jerseyans use every year and will help protect our waterways and ecosystems.

NEW JERSEY LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS 2022 COMMON AGENDA

For the 220th legislative session, the five priorities featured in New Jersey LCV's Common Agenda for the Environment include:



1 — CLEAN ENERGY

Codify NJ's commitment to a clean energy economy by updating our goals to be in line with President Biden's and advance efforts to reduce emissions in overburdened communities.



2 — TRANSPORTATION

The transportation sector contributes most to climate change and localized air pollution in New Jersey. We need to expand access to clean, reliable public transit to reduce emissions and pollution, and expand access to jobs for working families.



3 — GOVERNANCE

New Jersey is already feeling the effects of climate change and must adapt its disaster plans to account for this fact in order to protect our families and communities



4 — OPEN SPACE AND LAND USE

Preserve open space and reduce traffic by promoting responsible development that reduces the impacts large warehouses have on the environment and expand access to our protected spaces for all residents, especially Black and Brown communities that lack access.



5 — BUILT ENVIRONMENT

By changing the products we use to build and the ways we heat and cool our homes and water, we can improve public health outcomes and reduce pollution in the building sector.



CLEAN ENERGY

CODIFY NJ'S COMMITMENT TO A CLEAN ENERGY ECONOMY

- Legislative Priority: Develop and adopt Clean Electricity Standard (CES) legislation requiring 100 percent clean electricity by 2035 and net negative emissions by 2050, with strong commitments to reduce pollution in overburdened communities such as implementing a plan to shutter Peaker plants, and other complementary policies.
- Budget Priority: End Diversions from the Clean Energy Fund.

New Jersey policymakers recognize the critical need to mitigate the climate crisis by decarbonizing the economy through catalyzing clean energy production. New policy tools and regional approaches to dramatically expand the development of renewable resources within the regional electric grid, extending from Illinois to Virginia, have been explored and require finalization. New Jersey's Energy Master Plan of 2019 called for a CES to augment or replace the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS). After more than two years of policy exploration and development, technical conferences with national experts, and stakeholder input, it is time to adopt a Clean Electricity Standard.

The current RPS and Renewable Energy Credit market were important policy tools to begin the buildout of solar and wind resources, but lack key features needed to reduce emissions at higher levels of renewable deployment. Implementing a CES would greenlight more aggressive clean energy requirements for operation by 2023 in order to generate additional greenhouse gas emission reductions in the state and in the wider regional grid. Based on the most recent IPCC findings, the new CES should require 100 percent of all electricity sold to be from clean electricity by 2035, with net negative emissions by 2050 to offset more carbon than is contributed to the environment. At the same time, the CES should be structured so as to provide strong ratepayer protections against excessive costs, as well as, paired with significant complementary policies to reduce pollution in overburdened communities, such as closing Peaker plants - the dirtiest and most expensive power plants that only run when demand is highest, codifying New Jersey's laudable offshore wind goals, improvements in county air monitoring programs, and programs to help electrify the most inefficient households.



TRANSPORTATION

ENSURE COMMUNITIES HAVE ACCESSIBLE AND MODERN PUBLIC TRANSIT OPTIONS

- Legislative Priority: Establish innovative public transportation options focused on overburdened communities so people can get from their homes to already established public transit routes, and continue to electrify public transportation options like school buses.
- Budget Priority: Establish a dedicated funding source for NJ Transit.

Transportation is responsible for over 45% of greenhouse gas emissions and a primary contributor to localized air pollution in New Jersey. The negative health impacts of this pollution cannot be overstated, especially to the state's most vulnerable and overburdened communities. One of the best ways to reduce emissions and localized air pollution is to electrify traditional transportation options, including school buses, which are the most commonly used form of public transportation in the country. But more needs to be done.

Additionally, the idea of what public transportation looks like should be re-envisioned. Public transportation has traditionally meant mass transport via buses, trains, and ferries. While these conventional methods of transit serve as the primary engines of our public transit system, New Jersey must begin to take advantage of smaller, more creative options to take cars off the road. Mobility innovations, such as bike and e-bike shares, scooter shares, car-sharing, and electric van sharing, continue to show how roadways can create options that circumvent the use of cars while making use of and increasing access to existing cleaner forms of transit. Regional programs such as the Transportation and Climate Initiative and Low Carbon Fuel Standard could be suitable funding options for these innovations. This new industry of "shared mobility" helps transit riders overcome the "first mile, last mile" challenge – easing the burden of getting to and from traditional local transit networks to final destinations. Shared mobility can expand the potential catchment area for transit users where additional bus or rail service may not be feasible and increase transportation access to New Jersey residents who do not own a car.



GOVERNANCE

BUILD A MORE RESILIENT NEW JERSEY

- Legislative Priority: Integrate climate change resiliency into the State Hazard Mitigation Plan to combat the severity of flooding and sea-level rise in a changing world.
- Budget Priority: Create a \$10 million grant, a low-interest loan program for municipalities to explore local financing options for public infrastructure projects that prioritize natural solutions such as green infrastructure.

The State Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) captures historic disaster experiences and reflects the natural and human-caused hazards New Jersey faces, based on current science and research. The State HMP outlines strategies to reduce risks from hazards and serves as the basis for prioritizing future project funding, however, lacks an evaluation of what future hazards could emerge as the state, more specifically low-wealth communities, suffer and become increasingly more at risk from the worsening impacts of the climate crisis. All States are required to have a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)-approved hazard mitigation plan to be eligible for disaster recovery assistance and mitigation funding. The State HMP must be updated and submitted to FEMA for approval at least once every three years in order to maintain eligibility for FEMA grant programs. The most recent State HMP was implemented in 2019 and is due to be reassessed in 2022.

New Jersey has already experienced the effects of climate change through more mild winters and hotter summers, more intense rainfall that has increased flooding along inland waterways, and sea-level rise on the coast. The events have led to costly damage to public and private property, threatened public health and safety, and even claimed lives. There is a clear consensus that these events will continue to undermine critical infrastructure and negatively impact the economy, particularly with regard to the tourism of the state's lakes and shore communities. Due to unjust racist practices like redlining, overburdened communities are already experiencing these stressors more severely than whiter and higher-wealth communities. Overburdened communities are more likely to have higher air and water pollution levels, be located in a flood zone and more chronically suffer from an urban heat island.



GOVERNANCE

In light of this fact, overburdened communities should be prioritized by the State HMP for mitigation funding. This pre-existing legislation, paired with the policy resources developed by the administration, provides the framework that would be needed to modernize New Jersey's HMP that includes the most up to date assessments of how climate change is impacting the state, as well as, informs what strategies can be implemented to reduce risks from these hazards while also prioritizing over-burdened communities. The resources needed to finance updating New Jersey's HMP are already included in the budget for the Office of Emergency Management. Additionally, municipalities will need funds as they identify opportunities to build climate resilience and improve community infrastructures to pay for these critical upgrades. Therefore, the State, through the Department of Environmental Protection, should administer a \$10 million grant or low-interest loan program for municipalities to explore and implement innovative financing mechanisms like stormwater utilities to pay for these critical investments that prioritize green infrastructure solutions.



OPEN SPACE AND LAND USE

PROTECT AND INCREASE ACCESS TO OPEN SPACES

- Legislative Priority: Control rapidly expanding and unsystematic warehouse sprawl to prioritize responsible development and protect intact open spaces and surrounding communities.
- Budget Priority: Increase staffing at the Green Acres program within the DEP and ensure sufficient funding for trail monitoring, maintenance, and general upkeep.

Parks and open spaces improve physical and psychological health, strengthen communities, serve as resources and habitats for wildlife, provide environmental and economic benefits to area residents and make neighborhoods and cities more attractive places to live and work. New Jersey is the most densely populated state, which is why it is so important to protect and invest in new and existing green spaces. Over the past few years, significant work has been done to dedicate funding for open space preservation, however, funding still is limited for maintenance.

However, many residents, predominantly Black and Brown communities lack adequate access to well-designed, funded, and maintained parks, playgrounds, or green spaces within a 10-minute walk from their home or place of work. Green and open spaces are crucial to the wellbeing of a community and can be used for collaborative projects like community gardens, which can revitalize communities and provide access to fresh produce. There is a recognized need in the state for additional park maintenance funding and staff at the DEP to maintain and operate state parks and open spaces to make sure that everyone has equitable access to them, no matter their zip code, language, or physical ability. The state should also explore opportunities for further non-profit collaboration.

Moreover, one major threat to New Jersey's open and green spaces is the rapid and unsystematic expansion of warehouses. Warehouse sprawl has become a real threat to the quality of life in communities throughout the state.



OPEN SPACE AND LAND USE

New Jersey has become a hub for warehouse sprawl due to the e-commerce boom and further facilitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as, New Jersey's strategic location between two massive domestic and international markets, and comprehensive highway networks. The rapid surge of large-sized warehouses has caused significant issues that cross municipal boundaries such as increases in diesel-fueled heavy-duty trucking traffic, localized air pollution, and loss of open spaces.

Additionally, the construction and operation of warehouses can also have severe economic consequences, forcing local businesses to close their doors resulting in job loss and hampered economic activity in downtown communities. Thousands of New Jersey's undeveloped greenfield acres can be lost without a coordinated regional approach to warehouse development. In many cases, open spaces have been haphazardly developed without consideration of the impacts on neighboring municipalities. As a result, surrounding towns are left grappling with increased traffic and tractor-trailers on their local roadways. The state needs to find a solution to this rapidly escalating issue without placing the burden on environmental justice communities.



BUILT ENVIRONMENT

REDUCE CARBON POLLUTION FROM HOMES AND BUSINESSES

- Legislative Priority: Encourage companies to adopt practices and technologies that lower greenhouse gas emissions from building materials.
- Budget Priority: Create a \$15 million pilot program solely focused on electrifying antiquated and inefficient housing, and seek to end new residential natural gas interconnections by 2030.

New Jersey is at the center of bold climate and justice action. Nation-leading progress has been made to decarbonize the power generating and transportation sectors, which represent a large swath of emissions in the state. A remaining sector in need of action is the building sector. One way to begin decarbonizing the building sector is to look at how we build and what products are used. Concrete is the most common building material on the planet, and we produce 30 billion tons of it globally every year. The main binding ingredient in concrete is Portland cement, which is produced through an extremely carbon-intensive process that accounts for 7-8% of global emissions. Providing an incentive for concrete companies to use innovative technologies and materials to mitigate carbon emissions is an effective climate policy, especially as states buy an enormous share of concrete.

How buildings and water are heated and cooled in new and existing buildings needs to be reconsidered. As an old state with old building stock, fossil fuels are the primary method for heating space and water. As a result, diminished indoor air quality has emerged as a major public health issue due to byproducts of fossil fuel burning, making buildings a leading cause of premature death in the State. To address the health hazards posed by conventional methods of heating and cooling, mitigate the climate crisis, and protect residents from rising utility bills, home heating needs to be re-evaluated. For existing housing stock, the Board of Public Utilities should create a pilot program that seeks to electrify old housing heated by home heating fuels, propane, and antiquated electric systems and transition these households to modern and cost-effective electric systems through a \$15 million pilot program. For new homes, the smartest way to build is with the understanding that fossil fuel prices are rising and the need to reduce their use has never been more important, so the State should explore options to end new residential natural gas interconnections by 2030.

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