



Opening Statement of Chairman Brian Babin

Investigations and Oversight Subcommittee Hearing
Justice for Whom? Examining the Justice40 Initiative's Oversight and Implementation
June 26, 2025

Thank you, Chairman McCormick, for holding this important hearing.

Today, we convene to discuss a matter of significant concern: the excessive regulatory burden, lack of transparency, and clear ineffectiveness of the previous Administration's Justice40 Initiative.

Launched by an executive order during President Biden's first week in office, Justice40 was billed as a "whole-of-government" effort to ensure that 40 percent of all federal investments in climate, energy, and environmental programs would benefit "disadvantaged communities."

The stated goal may sound admirable. But good intentions do not excuse bad governance. And Justice40 is a textbook case of how vague mandates, flawed models, and unaccountable agencies can combine to create confusion, waste taxpayer dollars, and ultimately fail the very communities it aims to support.

Justice40 was vast in scope, covering more than 500 programs across 19 federal agencies. Yet it operated with no clear statutory authorization, no centralized oversight structure, and definitional ambiguity. What exactly constitutes a "benefit"? What qualifies as a "disadvantaged community"? The previous Administration never answered these fundamental questions.

Instead, it created a regulatory labyrinth of conflicting interpretations, opaque spending decisions, and inconsistent data reporting.

Applicants—especially small businesses and organizations in the communities Justice40 targeted—were forced to wade through bureaucratic red tape and hire costly consultants just to compete for funding. What once were merit-based, streamlined grants became politically charged paperwork marathons.

And despite all of this complexity, there's little evidence that the program actually helped the communities it was meant to serve.

A recent GAO report found that many agencies were unable to track whether benefits were reaching the intended recipients.

The prior Administration's so-called Environmental Justice Scorecard—meant to show Justice40's progress—is riddled with inconsistencies. For example, one agency with 65 relevant programs reported 12,000 funding opportunities. Yet no independent body has been tasked with auditing Justice40 outcomes.

Let's be clear: programs that purport to serve the vulnerable must be held to the highest standards—not exempted from accountability.

But, Justice40 took the opposite approach—abandoning merit-based decisions in favor of vaguely defined beneficiary groups and prioritizing political ideology over localized needs.

Our goal today is not to dismiss the needs of struggling Americans. Quite the opposite.

We are here to review whether Justice40 fulfilled its stated mission or simply created the illusion of progress while bypassing transparency and federal grant regulations.

The American people deserve policies that work, not programs packed with buzzwords that sound good in press releases but fall apart in practice.

I thank our witnesses for joining us this morning, and I look forward to the discussion ahead.