

Rep. Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of The House
H-232 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
S-230 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

Rep. Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader
H-204 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Charles Schumer, Minority Leader
S-221 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, and the Leadership of the United States Congress:

Everyone deserves the abundant life (John 10:10) promised by Jesus. This includes the right to live in a clean, healthy, just, and fair community free from the devastating impact of fossil fuel pollution and the COVID-19 symptoms that it exacerbates.

Our belief is based in our Scriptures, which state:

But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!
(Amos 5:24, NIV)

And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8b, NIV)

Today we face not one but two direct attacks on our wellbeing. First, we struggle with COVID-19 and the quickly approaching death toll of 150,000 Americans. At the same time air pollution, primarily caused by fossil fuel [combustion, kills 194,000](#) Americans every single year, including over [5,000 newborn babies](#).

These twin tragedies are connected.

Air pollution in the form of smog (ground level ozone), soot (PM_{2.5}) and other pollutants compromises our respiratory and cardiovascular systems. This in turn [exacerbates the symptoms of COVID 19](#), especially in communities of color where [higher rates of illness or death](#) occur due to increased exposure to harmful pollution. Even before COVID-19 reared its terrible head, we have been subsidizing the fossil fuel industry with almost 200,000 American lives each year.

God created each of us. Therefore, every human life is sacred. That is why it is so important to defend life at every stage from all that threatens its flourishing: by combating racism, by listening to medical professionals, and by acting out of concern for our most vulnerable neighbors. Defending life is our topmost concern—as such, we can no longer separate the COVID-19 and the pollution crisis in America. The good news is we can address both at the same time.

As Congress considers a new stimulus package, they would be wise to consider the demands of over 2 million pro-life Christians, dedicated to defending the lives of their children, who have called for 100% clean energy by 2030 and almost 65,000 of whom recently urged Congress to provide healthy, clean, family-supporting jobs in the next stimulus package.

We are not alone in this request. The Evangelical Environmental Network joined with the [Coalition for Clean Energy and Healthy Communities](#). While we and our coalition partners do not share identical motivations or strategies, we have come together—putting our differences aside during this critical and unprecedented time in our nation’s history and for our children’s future—to seek a common and righteous goal: to overcome COVID-19, defend our children’s lives from pollution, and rebuild a clean economy that offers hope for all while addressing the climate crisis.

The [Coalition for Clean Energy and Healthy Communities](#) (CCEHC) is a convening of 41 organizations representing millions of people across the country demanding that Congress prioritize policies that provide direct assistance to people, create good jobs for all—including in the clean energy sector—bolster policies that will grow the economy and cut pollution, correct inequities linked to environmental injustices and health disparities, address the climate crisis, and accelerate the transition to cleaner sources of energy.

As evidenced by our petition language, the Evangelical Environmental Network and almost 65,000 pro-life Christians from around our nation have the same goals:

During this coronavirus crisis, I join with thousands of other pro-life Christians to ask our Senators and Representatives to continue to come together, setting partisanship aside, and to create a cleaner, brighter, and healthier future for all Americans. Our God transforms bad into good. We must do the same for our country. We ask that once it is safe to resume normal economic activity, we put people back to work in ways that support healthy lives and livelihoods by:

- 1. Making our transportation, energy, manufacturing, and building industries more efficient and less harmful to our health.***
- 2. Helping our farmers practice good stewardship that locks carbon away in the ground while enriching the soil and providing financial support to the men and women who put food on America's table.***
- 3. Putting millions of Americans to work to make it happen.***

We are at a critical juncture in the effort to jumpstart an economic recovery from the coronavirus crisis - a juncture that will impact the health and prosperity of Americans today and for generations to come. The Evangelical Environmental Network and CCEHC strongly urges that any COVID-19 relief package, economic stimulus package, or other legislation designed to drive economic growth include provisions that meet the criteria described below.

We need Congress to provide immediate relief to our hard-hit states and local communities, our healthcare and essential workers, and other American workers and facilities that have been devastated by the recent pandemic and its attendant health and economic impacts. As a nation, we

have the historic opportunity to rebuild a stronger, more sustainable, more equitable country for ourselves and our children. And we must come together to do so. The need is urgent and we can't let this opportunity pass us by. While we, as conservatives, continue to desire accountable government that is fiscally responsible, we also understand that the people of the United States cannot endure a recession like a decade ago. Therefore, we are committed to working with Congress to pursue bipartisan legislation that seeks to immediately spur job creation by drawing on the promise of the future rather than holding tight to the answers of the past.

Specifically, we are seeking the following priorities.

Clean energy incentives: It is well documented that mature and declining industries like fossil fuels have received at least nine (9) times more U.S. government support than renewable fuels.¹ Even the *Lazard Levelized Cost of Energy 2019 Report*² convincingly shows how utility-scale wind and solar electric generation already provide lower cost energy than coal and, when paired with storage, are becoming competitive with natural gas in many markets. Investment in clean energy will accelerate this transition while reducing the pollution impacts on frontline communities that led to severe health impacts before the crisis, and [higher mortality rates](#) during the pandemic. Congress should support clean energy tax incentives for technologies that are truly clean and do not exacerbate pollution.

Building efficiency and bolstering electrification: During the pandemic and beyond, we need to improve building efficiency and bolster electrification to lower utility bills for families, small businesses and communities, while we reduce pollution and ensure that everyone has access to adequate heating and cooling. Specifically, Congress should provide additional assistance to the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), and Community Development Financial Institutions Fund (CDFI).

Clean transportation: Pollutants from fossil fuel combustion harms respiratory and cardiovascular health, [exacerbating the symptoms of COVID 19](#). Transportation investments and policy solutions must work towards reducing pollution and providing affordable and accessible transit options for our communities. These solutions should also provide greater mobility options for transit, move toward transportation electrification for people and goods, and be based on resilient infrastructure. Specifically, Congress should invest in mass transit and the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA).

Building resilient communities: The compounding effects of COVID 19, the current hurricane season, threats from wildfires, and other hazards put local communities and emergency managers at greater risk than ever. It is time to invest in building more resilient communities, particularly frontline, vulnerable, Indigenous and communities of color that have suffered from disinvestment and been disproportionately affected by pollution and extreme weather for too long. Specifically, we support additional investment in the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG),

¹ Mitchell Hescocx and Paul Douglas, *Caring For Creation: The Evangelical's Guide to Climate Change and a Healthy Environment*, Bethany House, Minneapolis, MN, 2016, p.116-117.

² <https://www.lazard.com/perspective/lcoe2019>

the Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Justice Grant Program, and the PREPARE Act.

Clean and safe water: We need immediate action to ensure all individuals and families have access to clean water. We must also consider significant, long-term investments in our water programs and systems across the country to eliminate water inequities, spur economic recovery and growth, and build strong, resilient communities. Specifically, we urge that Congress enact protections to prevent water shut offs, while encouraging investments in expanding water affordability.

Land and water restoration: Land and water restoration will improve biodiversity for overall ecosystem health and should ease the pollution burden on communities, while related infrastructure projects will get people back to work. In the immediate term, we support the expansion of efforts to clean up orphan wells, which will boost much-needed jobs and keep our waterways and skies freer from pollution.

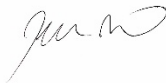
Now is the time for bold leadership. Our country is suffering under debilitating health and economic conditions that will require creativity, collaboration, massive resources, and the courage and determination to do all that is necessary to defend life and secure livelihoods. All actions by Congress should first provide much needed relief to the impacted communities and workers who are suffering most. Additionally, Congress should implement recovery strategies that address the causes of, and accelerate the recovery from, COVID-19 in a way that protects the long-term health and vitality of our people and our economy. We do not have to choose between a healthy environment and a healthy recovery. We can and must have both.

Thank you for your service and commitment to our country.

Sincerely,



Rev. Mitchell C. Hescoc
President/CEO
Evangelical Environmental
Network



Dr. Jessica Moerman
Senior Director, Science and
Policy
Evangelical Environmental
Network



Rev. Kyle Meyaard-Schaap
National Organizer and
Spokesperson
Young Evangelicals for Climate
Action