

Executive Order 14096: Revitalizing Our Nation's Commitment to Environmental Justice for All

On April 21, 2023, President Biden **issued** an historic Executive Order (EO) to advance environmental justice. The order states that “restoring and protecting a healthy environment – wherever people live, work, learn, grow, and worship – is a matter of justice and a fundamental duty that the Federal Government must uphold on behalf of all people.”

Recognizing that every person has a right to breathe clean air, drink clean water and live in a healthy community, the EO calls on agencies to implement and enforce the nation's environmental and civil rights laws, prevent pollution, address climate change and its effects, and work to clean up legacy pollution that is harming human health and the environment.

This **new EO** builds on **President Biden's 2021 EO 14008: Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad**, and President Clinton's **1994 Environmental Justice EO 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations**. The April EO also incorporates recommendations and significant feedback and work from the White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council (WHEJAC). WHEJAC members are community experts in environmental and racial justice, appointed by the President to provide recommendations on addressing current and historical harms.

The new EO includes commitments to:

» Deepen federal agencies' “commitment to environmental justice.”

Environmental justice must be incorporated into the missions of all executive branch agencies and “central to the implementation of our bedrock civil rights and environmental laws.”

» Protect overburdened communities from the disproportionate impacts of pollution and environmental harms.

Agencies must examine how they can address the adverse cumulative impacts of pollution, climate change, and other burdens that disproportionately impact communities of color and low-income communities—also referred to as environmental justice, or environmental justice, communities—around the country.

➤ **Strengthen crisis communications between agencies and communities in the event of a toxic substance release.**

In the event of a toxic substance release from a federal facility, agencies must notify communities in a timely manner and hold a public meeting to share information about health risks and precautions to ensure a more effective response for protecting public health.

➤ **Strengthen agency-community engagement to address and work to resolve legacy barriers to participation embedded in injustices.**

The EO directs agencies to actively work to provide meaningful opportunities for community engagement, recognizing racism's key role in the environmental injustices and obstacles to participation in federal-decision making opportunities. More notably, the EO highlights the need for and importance of consultation and coordination with Tribes in decision making.

➤ **Identify data gaps and make available to relevant communities the latest science, data, and research to better address environmental injustices.**

Agencies are directed to identify and address data and research gaps in environmental justice to address issues like cumulative impacts and make these findings publicly accessible to communities. The EO also creates a new Environmental Justice (EJ) Subcommittee within the National Science and Technology Council to coordinate and advance these efforts. This will be led by the Office of Science and Technology Policy.

➤ **Create and launch an Office of Environmental Justice within the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).**

The White House Office of Environmental Justice (within CEQ) will be headed by a Federal Chief Environmental Justice Officer who is tasked with coordinating environmental justice policy across the entire federal government. The EO will also add agencies to the White House Environmental Justice Interagency Council to advance a whole-of-government approach to address environmental injustices.

➤ **Update and implement Environmental Justice Strategic Plans and Assessments that will increase accountability and transparency in federal processes.**

The EO requires federal agencies to develop and regularly update assessments of their environmental justice efforts. The agencies must report updates to the Council on Environmental Quality and the general public on their progress. Assessments will be made public via the Environmental Justice Scorecard.