NOVEMBER 2026

JUST CLIMATE FUTURES AGENDA

FOR THE 120TH CONGRESS



Platform *for a* Just Climate

Just Climate Futures Agenda

We are in a moment of generational change. The 2026 Midterm elections have shown us how environmental justice (EJ) issues have driven a wave of progressive populism and brought real representation for frontline communities into Congress.

Over the past year, we saw how elections across the country were reshaped by EJ fights: from stopping the harms of AI data centers to advocating for protections from extreme weather, demanding clean and affordable energy, and fighting for our fundamental rights to breathe clean air and drink clean water.

This election cycle has shown the power of the people coming together to demand accountability from corporate polluters and big tech. Now is the time for our representatives to show what people power really means in action.

The Platform for a Just Climate calls on Congress to respond to voter demands by enacting our Just Climate Futures Agenda. This includes:

- **Clean & Affordable Energy:** funding programs that cut household energy costs and restore funding for community-led clean energy projects
- **No Deregulation for Dirty Data Centers:** protecting communities from the harms of power-hungry AI data centers and opposing the deregulation of coal and gas power plants
- **Climate Solutions Not Corporate Pollution:** funding programs that advance locally led climate solutions and protect communities from climate-driven extreme weather, restore EPA budget to protect human health and safety
- **Build Just Climate Futures:** support visionary policies such as the A. Donald McEachin Environmental Justice for All Act and work to restore and expand voting rights

Clean & Affordable Energy

Energy affordability ranked as a top issue for voters in the 2026 midterm election, with rising utility and gas prices felt not just at the pump but also in utility bills. Voters have resoundingly rejected the high cost of Trump's fossil fuel agenda at the ballot box. EJ communities, low-income communities, and Black and brown communities face a "triple burden" from our energy systems: disproportionately high energy costs, greater exposure to fossil fuel pollution, and heightened vulnerability to climate-driven extreme weather. Many coal- and gas-fired power plants are sited in or near EJ

communities, exposing residents to soot, smog, and other pollutants from fossil fuel combustion. At the same time, these communities often live in substandard housing with limited access to energy efficiency improvements, green spaces, quality healthcare and are more vulnerable to damage from climate fueled disasters. Average household electricity bills rose roughly 9.6% in 2025 compared with 2024. Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous households pay higher portions of their income on energy than White households. As such, they are hit harder by these increases in bills and experience higher shut-off rates which is especially challenging due to worsening heatwaves that increase the need for electricity for cooling needs. We must deliver lower household energy costs while building clean power that not only reduces greenhouse gas emissions but also reduces the direct public health impacts of the power sector caused by locally harmful air pollutants and other activities. Congress must:

- **Provide direct utility bill relief:** Congress must protect ratepayers by investing in programs that provide bill assistance and safeguard against utility shutoffs. Congress must expand, strengthen, and fully staff the Low Income Heating and Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and protect households from utility shutoffs. Congress should also introduce and pass legislation to support the forgiveness of families' outstanding utility bill debt.
- **Reduce household energy costs:** Congress must invest in home health and decarbonization measures such as weatherization, efficient appliances, electrification of heating, and community solar, which can create lasting bill savings for low- and middle-income households by making structural changes to how energy is consumed. To help cut energy costs for families, Congress must invest in the following:
    - Expand the Weatherization Assistance Program to pay for insulation, air sealing, and other upgrades in eligible low-income homes.
    - Reauthorize the Energy Efficient Home Improvement Credits (25C) and make them refundable to reduce the cost of home energy-efficiency upgrades, including the purchase of heat pumps.
    - Significantly expand federal investments in Home Energy Rebates to accelerate home electrification and appliance upgrades for low-income and middle-income (LMI) households.
    - Expand grants for schools and child care centers to install heat pumps for efficient and cost-effective cooling and heating to ensure that children have a safe and healthy place to learn and play, with a focus on schools and centers in low-income communities and communities of color.
    - Expand Green and Resilient Retrofits Program funding to support electrification and energy efficiency improvements for public and affordable housing to lower energy bills and improve indoor air quality and reduce carbon and local pollution.
- **Expand solar power access for disadvantaged households:** Solar power can be a powerful tool to cut utility costs for families. Installing solar directly in homes can help reduce monthly household electricity bills. Community solar allows renters and low- and

middle-income households to participate in a solar program and access bill savings without needing to install solar on their homes. The Trump EPA has illegally cut the $7 billion appropriated Solar for All program, which was designed to disburse grant awards "to deliver residential solar projects to over 900,000 households nationwide," with a focus on disadvantaged communities. Congress must reinstate programs such as "Solar for All" and, through grants and rebates, expand access to community solar for low- and middle-income households.

- **Incentivize renewable energy and deliver clean air.** On September 14, 2026, the Trump EPA finalized the repeal of most of the 2024 Carbon Pollution Standards and simultaneously proposed rescinding all remaining power-sector greenhouse gas standards, on the theory that Section 111 of the Clean Air Act does not authorize the EPA to regulate power-plant greenhouse gas emissions to address climate change. These actions are part of the Administration's broader deregulatory agenda to give corporate polluters a free pass at the cost of our health, safety, and well-being. Congress must use tools at its disposal to overturn less protective environmental standards finalized by the Trump Administration, investigate power sector regulatory rollbacks and free passes given to fossil fuel companies, and demand that the Administration withdraw its legally deficient supplemental proposal to roll back all greenhouse gas standards for the power sector. At a time when we are seeing the "speed to power" rush by AI data centers drive expansion of more fossil fuel infrastructure and dirty energy, we need Congress to introduce and pass legislation that puts checks on fossil fuel companies, strengthens environmental standards for polluting power plants, and proactively reduces the cumulative burdens of soot and smog pollution in EJ communities. We need Congress to reinvest in and incentivize renewable energy, battery storage, and defend against the onslaught of new gas buildout.

No Deregulation for Dirty Data Centers

Dozens of AI data center proposals are targeting water-stressed, overburdened, and grid-constrained communities, often with very minimal public review or notice. U.S. hyperscale data centers are disproportionately located in and around communities of color, as well as those overburdened by air and water pollution. We know that the siting of polluting data centers is an EJ issue, but the threats posed by AI are far-reaching (including labor, privacy, surveillance, the rule of law, economic justice, financial welfare, and governance). Congress must:

- **Provide greater oversight to assess the threats posed by AI data centers.** Congress must hold investigative hearings to assess the threats posed by AI data centers, including threats to ratepayers, our health, our air and water, our quality of life, the economy, and democracy.
- **Ensure that data center developers do not obscure critical information about public health and safety.** Congress must ensure that data center developers do not obscure critical information about public health and safety through non-disclosure agreements and sweeping trade secrecy claims.

- **Ensure Big Tech foots the bill and does not lock in more pollution in our communities.** Ultimately, Congress should establish protections to ensure that data center developers bear the costs of their extraordinary energy demands rather than shifting them onto households, and that AI-driven electricity demand does not lock EJ communities into decades of additional fossil fuel pollution. We need Congress to empower state and local governments to protect communities from AI data center-driven air, water, and noise pollution.

Climate Solutions Not Corporate Pollution

This summer, global heat records shattered, scorching communities in southwest Texas, much of the Southwest, and California's interior valleys. Hurricanes and wildfire risks are more present than ever. EJ communities are at the front lines of the climate crisis. Congress needs to mobilize massive federal dollars to prepare for the impacts of climate change and clean up legacy pollution in EJ communities. Investing in people and in local climate infrastructure in the most underserved communities builds long-term resilience to extreme weather events for all. Congress must oppose cuts to climate solutions within every federal agency and restore the EPA budget to effectively advance local climate and EJ solutions. Congress must:

- **Protect communities from climate-driven extreme weather.** Congress must fund and restore programs that help communities withstand extreme heat, flooding, wildfire smoke, and other climate-related threats to public health. The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Building Resilient Communities and Infrastructure (BRIC) grant program provides states with funding to make communities' infrastructure more resilient to disasters. The program funded initiatives ranging from constructing safe rooms to protect against severe hurricanes to developing a community-led flood preparedness plan. The Trump Administration has attacked the BRIC program in the past year. In May, FEMA announced it was making $1 billion in BRIC funding available for states and local governments. However, a Government Accountability Office report released in October found that more than 700 subapplications for BRIC grants worth $2.2 billion remain in limbo. Congress must reinvest in FEMA staff expertise, release FEMA grant program funding in a timely way, and expand funding for programs such as FEMA's BRIC program to ensure communities most at risk receive resources to withstand the next climate disaster. Congress should invest in programs that support disaster recovery such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program. CDBG-DR provides long-term disaster recovery resources to communities so they can rebuild and prepare for future disasters. This program was extended through the Road to Housing Act of 2025, but it needs to be permanently authorized. Additionally, Congress should establish protective heat health standards for outdoor workers.

- **Reinvest in locally led climate solutions.** The Trump Administration has eliminated programs such as the Community Change Grants, EPA's Collaborative Problem Solving Grants, Thriving Communities Grant Program, and Climate Pollution Reduction Grants, which were designed to build cooling centers, resilience hubs, and other local climate infrastructure in the most underserved communities. Congress must restore and strengthen these investments

while ensuring that federal agencies have the staff, technical expertise, and grant-making capacity needed to help communities, Tribes, local governments, and states prepare for worsening climate impacts.

- **Fund programs that cut toxic pollution and protect communities on the fencelines of petroleum refineries and petrochemical and chemical facilities.** Working-class, low-income communities, communities of color, and Indigenous communities are disproportionately impacted by increased exposures to hazardous chemicals during feedstock extraction, during the manufacturing of chemicals, materials, and products, during their use, as well as after disposal at waste sites, which are located overwhelmingly near these communities and are documented to release chemicals into adjacent air, soils, and water bodies. Congress should uphold and strengthen protections that reduce toxic exposures in communities located near industrial, chemical, petrochemical, and waste facilities, keep polluters accountable and compliant with bedrock statutes, and promote a healthy and just manufacturing and chemicals sector that is decarbonized and detoxified. Congress must invest in research and development of safe alternatives for existing chemicals and technological pathways to create safer products.

- **Rebuild and expand EPA's capacity to protect human health and the environment**. Released April 3, 2026, the administration's FY27 budget proposes $4.2 billion for the EPA, a more than 50 percent cut from the $8.8 billion Congress enacted for FY26, and the agency's lowest funding level since the 1980s. Last year, after bipartisan pushback, Congress rejected a similarly deep proposed cut and enacted a reduction of only about 3.5 percent. The proposal calls for the complete elimination of EPA's EJ programs and nearly all grants to states. The FY27 President's budget request signals that the administration intends to keep pressing for these cuts each budget cycle. Congress must reject these proposed cuts and protect and expand EPA's capacity to monitor pollution, enforce federal environmental laws, protect public health, stop allowing the Trump Administration to give a free pass to polluters and provide states and communities with the resources necessary to address environmental hazards. Appropriators should protect and expand funding for these functions in the FY27 appropriations process and reject efforts to eliminate EJ programs through annual funding legislation.

- **Hold and expand investigative hearings to quantify the public health and economic harms and damages caused by Trump administration cancellations of specific EJ, climate, and energy projects.** The Trump Administration has clawed back billions of dollars in EJ investments through the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) and through administrative action. The affected projects included efforts to address extreme flooding, remove lead and asbestos from family homes, and monitor pollution in homes and schools. Notably, these funds were clawed back despite an EPA Inspector General finding that the EJ grant programs had been administered with integrity. Several lawmakers have already issued oversight letters and pursued related efforts, including amicus briefs in related litigation concerning Trump Administration actions to rescind or freeze EJ grants under the Inflation Reduction Act and other Biden Administration initiatives. Congressional committees should investigate which projects and communities lost funding, the public health and economic benefits that were

foregone, the legal and programmatic basis for terminating awards, and how rescinded federal resources were subsequently redirected. These investigations should inform future appropriations and legislation designed to ensure that communities do not lose critical federal investments through arbitrary administrative action. Additionally, Congress should reject efforts to weaken the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, Toxic Substances Control Act, and other functional laws that protect communities from pollution and provide pathways for accountability and public participation.

Build Just Climate Futures

Our country's path forward must include an end to the environmental racism that has turned many Black communities, Indigenous communities, and communities of color into sacrifice zones where corporate polluters operate with impunity. Our path forward also means an end to voter suppression, moving us toward a multiracial democracy where the universal right to representation is realized and protected. We urge the new Congress to put forward a visionary agenda to put power back in the hands of our communities and lift our country out of its spiraling energy affordability, public health, and climate crises. To move us toward a just climate future, Congress must:

- **Reintroduce and pass the *A. Donald McEachin Environmental Justice for All Act*** to create a just, pollution-free energy economy grounded in our values of self-determination in Black, Indigenous, and low-income communities and communities of color. The *A. Donald McEachin Environmental Justice for All Act* was created in partnership with communities on the frontlines, and it represents a powerful legacy of community–led policymaking championed by the late Rep. Raúl Grijalva and Rep. A. Donald McEachin. By passing the *A. Donald McEachin Environmental Justice for All Act*, Congress will:
    - Address cumulative impacts of pollution in permitting decisions and ensure that permits to facilities demonstrate a reasonable certainty of no harm to human health
    - Support communities and workers as they transition away from fossil fuel-dependent economies
    - Direct the federal government to develop EJ strategies and regularly report on implementation and progress
    - Fund research, education and outreach to support community-based projects that address environmental and public health issues
- **Prepare an effective oversight agenda for the 120th Congress** that holds big tech, powerful corporate polluters and the Trump Administration accountable and points toward ambitious climate action
- **Work to expand voting rights and defeat the voter suppression agenda** by restoring civil rights-era protections and introducing new legislation to strengthen democracy and the right to representation

The Platform for a Just Climate is a coalition of environmental justice groups and national environmental organizations from across the country, united around a shared commitment to ending the environmental racism that has left economically disadvantaged communities, Indigenous communities, Black communities, and communities of color exposed to disproportionate levels of toxic pollution and bearing the brunt of the climate crisis. Our Platform has stood strong since 2018 around our shared vision for a just climate future, and has grown to include over 300 signatory organizations from all over the country. Center for Earth, Energy & Democracy (CEED) is the convener of the Platform for a Just Climate. Learn more at ajustclimate.org