

Principles for Climate Justice

Climate change poses one of the greatest threats to social, economic, and racial equity here in Washington State and across the world. Our jobs, health, and communities where we live are threatened by the consequences of climate change and without bold interventions, we can expect more severe heat-waves, flooding, exposure to air pollutants and allergens, extreme weather events, food scarcity, and increased spread of disease. Our communities are not starting on an even footing since environmental and health outcomes are already negatively and disproportionately impacting our communities. These conditions will have the most direct impact on communities with lower incomes, indigenous people, and people of color. We are united by a deeply felt urgency to take immediate action to reduce carbon emissions in ways that address social, economic, health, and food justice.

Time and time again opponents of workers' rights, environmental protection, economic justice and public health have successfully pitted workers, environmentalists, people of color, and other communities against each other. We, as organizations and community leaders committed to racial, environmental, and economic justice call for a climate change policy that cuts carbon emission and addresses poverty, invests in disadvantaged communities, creates good clean energy jobs, and improves both air quality and public health.

We are collectively committed to achieving climate justice through the following principles:

Racial equity must be at the center of policies that address climate change.

- Policy choices and implementation approaches must be informed by and responsive to racial, environmental, and economic analysis.
- Communities most impactedⁱ by climate change must be fully engaged in policy design and implementation to ensure equitable outcomes.

People of color and communities with lower incomes must receive net-environmental and economic benefits.

- **Environmental Benefits:** The policy should ensure the reduction of carbon emissions. Reducing emissions now will lessen the problem of climate change, and therefore the burdens of adaptation, later on. Climate change is a public health issue that disproportionately impacts people of color and communities with lower incomes. The policy's environmental outcomes must therefore prioritize improvements to public health, especially through the equitable distribution of better air quality. Achieving this goal requires that Washington identify environmental justice "hotspots," or areas with high exposure to pollution and related social instability. This information should be publicly accessible, inform efforts impact climate change, and address existing disparities.
- **Economic benefits:** Revenue raised through any program should be used on strategies with a strong nexus with policies and programs that address climate change, and should be invested directly in lower-income communities, indigenous communities and communities of color so that the economic benefits outweigh the policy's economic burdens. Reinvested revenue should work to accomplish the following:

1. The highest priority for reinvestment must be to mitigate financial costs of implementation to communities with lower incomes.
2. Further reduce our reliance on fossil fuels.
3. Create clean, living wage jobs that open pathways for people with lower-incomes, people of color, and local residents to enter the green industry workforce.
4. Enable people to live where they work with access to clean transportation, an affordable place to live, and clean and secure food sources.

Ensure accountability and transparency through public, accessible, and culturally appropriate participation and strong enforcement

- Effective engagement with lower-income communities, indigenous communities, and people of color in both policy design and implementation will help ensure equitable outcomes. A successful policy will require the state agencies responsible for its implementation to monitor its impacts on climate change indicators on an ongoing basis, and to make this information publicly available.

ⁱ We define the communities most impacted by climate change as the following communities: people of color, people with lower incomes, indigenous communities, and farm workers.