

# FACT SHEET



virginia interfaith  
power & light

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## Support the Virginia Environmental Justice Act

### Support:

**SB 406 – Sen. Hashmi**

**HB 704 – Del. Keam**

### Problem: Polluting facilities are often placed in marginalized and overburdened communities.

In the Commonwealth, that is no different. Vulnerable populations in Virginia continue to bear increased risks from all kinds of activities, including oil, gas, and mineral extraction, new polluting facilities, the burning and transport of fossil fuels, and the impacts of climate change itself.

Environmental justice deals with fairness—how both the benefits and burdens of natural resource development are distributed.

### Policy solution:

Virginia should remedy this current and historical disparity of harm placed on low-income families and communities of color, by implementing an essential procedural framework required to ensure that policies and programs represent and benefit all Virginians.

Putting environmental justice into practice at the state level primarily means transparency in decision-making, ensuring decisions are adequately informed, and empowering agencies to make decisions to reduce or eliminate anticipated adverse impacts. Virginia currently lacks a basic environmental justice policy and the tools to carry it out.

The bills create a basic environmental justice framework for the Commonwealth. They require the Governor's Secretariats to create agency specific environmental justice strategies and require state

agencies to incorporate environmental justice into their regulations and policies.

Clarifying the role and responsibilities of the governor's secretaries, state agencies, and creating an inter-agency working group would create accountability for this important civil rights issue.

### Who benefits:

#### **Low-income families and communities of color:**

Many studies have shown disproportionate burdens placed on low-income communities, communities of color, and indigenous communities, such as pollution, hazardous workplace conditions, industrial operations and a shortage of access to playgrounds, parks, nutritious foods, etc.

#### **Public health & engagement:**

Environmental stressors are linked to significant health risks, such as cancer, heart disease, asthma among many others. Given disproportionate environmental burden and thus health impact, it is critical that communities have a voice in decisions impacting them.

#### **The environment:**

Reducing pollution in overburdened communities would help to care for all of Creation, including the Earth.

Sources: *Virginia Conservation Network, Virginia Environmental Justice Collaborative, Union of Concerned Scientists CSD*

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*Virginia Interfaith Power & Light collaborates, as people of faith, to grow healthy communities and advance climate justice through education, advocacy, and worship. VAIPL is a program of the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy.*