



Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
UU advocacy in the nation's capital

As of 2020-10-02



Write Here! Write Now!

Contact: advocacy@uusj.org or 202.600.9132

Delivery of Letters - Organizers: All Letters due by Thursday, October 15, 3pmET

NEW try doing an individual letter online [HERE](#) or submit letters [Submission Form \(upload\)](#)

Email by Thursday, October 15 by 6 pmET to advocacy@uusj.org.

Mail to: ***NEW*** UUSJ c/o Paulette DeMers, 3745 Tech Dr NW, Rochester MN 55901

Tell Your U.S. Senators to demand that EPA address the unjust burden of climate change and pollution on frontline communities.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2021

Why Are We Writing? Our faith calls us to promote action and accountability of legislators. Multiple sources of pollution and climate change disproportionately affect minority and low-income communities' health. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has failed to prioritize these critical environmental justice concerns.

Why now? The Senate is currently considering EPA's budget for FY 2021. The House passed slightly increased amounts for environmental justice, but less than what the problem demands. The Senate must do better. See The Hill article, [A just EPA budget for environmental justice](#).

Background: Every day frontline communities cope with pollution from power plants and factories. They suffer the worst burdens of increased floods, fires, and heat waves caused by climate change. Congress provides EPA with an annual appropriation for environmental justice. "Today, EPA's environmental justice program is barely a shell of what the agency needs to play a leadership role — or any meaningful role — in ensuring fair environmental treatment for our nation's communities of color and lower income communities."

Right now we can influence the EPA's budget and promote environmental justice. The Senate must bring a FY21 appropriations act to the floor for a vote. If the Senate passes a bill that differs from the version passed by the House, a Conference Committee will draft a version for final passage.

UU Grounding: Promoting environmental justice falls squarely within our UU 1st Principle to affirm the inherent worth and dignity of all people, our 2nd Principle calling for justice, equity, and compassion in human relations, and our 7th Principle calling for us to respect the interdependent web of all existence.

(See other side for Key Message, Talking Points, and Sample Letter)

Key Message & Our Ask

Message: Polluted air and water and contaminated land disproportionately affect low-income areas and communities of color. Racial and ethnic minority groups experience greater COVID-19 illness and death, exacerbated by their long-term exposure to air pollution.

Ask: Tell your Senators to adequately fund and expand environmental justice programs at EPA. More water and sewer grants should be directed towards disadvantaged communities. Ask your Senator to support a provision that is in the House Bill that would stop EPA's efforts to allow continuing emissions of dangerous particulate emissions.

Suggested Talking Points

(use your own examples, tell your story, and/or draw on some of these suggested points)

- **Protect vulnerable communities from toxic chemicals by bolstering funding for environmental justice at the EPA.** Research shows that a handful of egregiously polluting facilities account for the majority of toxic releases. A disproportionate share of these facilities are located near Black and Brown neighborhoods. [Linking 'toxic outliers' to communities](#). EPA's environmental justice program could alleviate this injustice. See House Committee on Appropriations [REPORT](#) on H.R. 7608 at p. 88.
 - **Investigate nexus between pollutant exposures and health outcomes in coronavirus patients with \$2.5 million.** Recent studies have found links between chronic exposure to hazardous air pollutants and COVID-19 mortality rates.
 - **Tell the EPA to focus more grant funds on impacted communities with crying needs.** Twelve percent of U.S. households struggle to pay water bills; over 9 million homes, many in our nation's poorest cities, receive water through lead pipes; and nearly 3,000 communities have lead poisoning levels twice as high as those in Flint, Mich., during its water crisis.
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Sample Letter to Your Senators

[Use your own words. Speak from your heart -- this is only a sample letter. Follow the link below to see if your senators are co-sponsors of the bill, if yes thank the senator.]

[Today's date]

Dear Senator _____, *[write to both of your Senators]*

I'm a Unitarian Universalist from *[optional: name of congregation and location]*, and supporter of the Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice. A fundamental principle of our faith is respect for the interdependent web of all existence. We have a deep concern for the environment and for people who suffer most from the ill effects of pollution, especially minority and low-income communities.

I urge you to take action to increase environmental justice funding at the Environmental Protection Agency.

[To support the message include in your own words a personal experience, a story, or concern relating to the environmental justice or health effects of pollution. Or use a talking point from above to adapt.] As the Senate considers FY21 appropriations for EPA, please take action to promote environmental justice by providing increased funding for environmental justice programs in impacted communities. I urge you to also direct EPA to continue important research on the links between pollution and health, particularly increased risk to COVID-19.

[adapt a closing such as... I look forward to hearing about your plans to ensure that EPA's budget gives appropriate support to environmental justice.]

Sincerely, *[YOUR NAME and include your COMPLETE ADDRESS]*

(See other side for Why We Are Writing, Background, UU Grounding, and Instructions for Delivering Letters)