



POLICY CAMPAIGNS & INITIATIVES: 2017 AGENDA

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES TO POWER CHANGE.



1 // The Asthma Free Homes Act Intro 385-A, 46 co-sponsors

We demand that homes in our communities be free of mold and pests, which are known respiratory health triggers. To achieve that goal, WE ACT supports the passage of Intro 385-A, the Asthma Free Homes Act, a bill that would amend the administrative code of the city of New York to require that landlords determine if there are people with respiratory illnesses in their buildings and inspect their apartments for respiratory health triggers. If mold and pests are found, they must eliminate those triggers by addressing the underlying factors that produced the problem in a specified time frame, using specified methods. The primary sponsor of this bill is Council member Rosie Mendez of Manhattan Council District 2. The bill is in the Housing and Buildings Committee.

2 // The Environmental Justice Study Bill Intro 359, Passed in council (4/5/17)

Communities of color and low-income communities across New York City bear a disproportionate burden of the toxic, noxious polluting facilities and suffer from higher rates of negative health outcomes. We demand that the city identifies and collects the data it needs to document environmental injustices citywide. We support the passage of Intro 359, a bill that would amend the administrative code of the city of New York to require that a study of potential environmental justice communities be conducted. Under this bill, the results of that study would be made available to the public and placed on the city's website. The primary sponsor of this bill is Council member Costa Constantinides of Queens Council District 22 and it has 35 co-sponsors.



3 // Phase Out of Number 4 Oil in Boilers Intro 1465, 2 co-sponsors

In 2012, WE ACT was one of the leading groups pushing the city to require landlords to clean up the dirty home heating oils that were spewing into people's homes and triggering respiratory illnesses like asthma. We also advocated to make sure that landlords couldn't file for Major Capital Improvements (MCI) and raise rents. Today, we continue the push for greater public health protections and cleaner emissions from buildings in our neighborhoods by working for an earlier phase out of Number 4 oil. Intro 1465 would require that the timeline for the phase out of Number 4 oil in boilers be moved up from 2030 to 2025. The primary sponsors of this bill are Council member Ritchie Torres of the Bronx Council District 15 and Council member Costa Constantinides of Queens Council District 22. The bill is in the Committee on Environmental Protection.



NYC

4 // Urban Heat Island Tracking and Reduction in vulnerable communities Intro TBD

One of the deadliest impacts of climate change is also one of the most overlooked — extreme heat kills more Americans each year than all the other natural disasters combined. Based on research conducted by WE ACT in partnership with City University of New York, Adapt NY, iSee Change and WNYC Public Radio, we now know that even in the evenings, indoor heat temperatures in the summer remain dangerously high. We need to act to protect people from the effects of our urban heat island, especially in communities with high numbers of seniors and others with high rates of health disparities. WE ACT demands that the city track and focus on the heat island effect in vulnerable communities across the city, and that it take steps to mitigate the worst outcomes of the heat island effect in those communities. To achieve this goal, we will look for a prime sponsor of such a bill and get it introduced in the council before the end of 2017.

5 // The Environmental Justice Policy Bill Intro 886, Passed in council (4/5/17)

We need to move beyond just studying the problem of environmental injustice in our communities to developing policies that bring environmental justice to our communities. WE ACT demands that the city of New York develop an environmental justice policy that is grounded in the Principles of Environmental Justice. To advance this vision, WE ACT supports the passage of Intro 886, a bill that would amend the administrative code of the city of New York to require that city agencies develop plans to address environmental injustices in communities of color and low income communities in consultation with those communities. This bill would also require the establishment of an environmental justice advisory body, comprised of EJ advocates, to work with the city on identifying and addressing environmental injustices. The primary sponsor of this bill is Council member Inez Barron of Brooklyn Council District 42.

**6 // Critical Community Infrastructure Bill
Intro TBD**

In the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, we all witnessed that communities of color and low-income communities had to endure daily life without gas and electrical power for many months after the storm had passed. Meanwhile, Wall Street was up and running with electrical power 24-48 hours afterwards because it was deemed critical to our economy to keep the stock market open. WE ACT demands that certain infrastructure in our communities, like cooling centers, be designated critical infrastructure and that they be required to be powered by renewable locally generated sources of power so that they are resilient in the aftermath of an extreme weather event. The bill would also address the location of these facilities to ensure that they are in the most resilient locations, or for existing facilities, require that steps be taken to make them more resilient at their current location. The bill would also require that these facilities be clearly designated and that wayfinding systems be planned and developed with the community. WE ACT will look for a prime sponsor of such a bill and get it introduced in the city council before the end of 2017.

**7 // Require NYC to Divest from Financial Institutions E.g. Wells Fargo that provide financial support for the Dakota Access Pipeline
Intro TBD**

WE ACT will work with Council member Helen Rosenthal of Manhattan Council District 6 to introduce a bill to require New York City to divest from Wells Fargo and other financial institutions that provide funding for the Dakota Access Pipeline.

8 // Update the City Environmental Quality Review Act (CEQRA) to require that heat and heat vulnerability in communities be addressed

Heat waves are one of the leading weather related causes of death and there are far too few policy tools in place to adequately deal with heat vulnerability that many communities of color and low-income communities currently face. Because New York City's vulnerability assessment only sees this problem getting worse, WE ACT calls on the city through regulation to update the City Environmental Quality Review Act (CEQRA) to require that it more adequately address the issue of increasing extreme heat days. This update will better protect many in communities of color and low-income communities, especially children and seniors. Toward that end, WE ACT will call on the Office of the Mayor to ensure that this regulatory change moves forward.

NYC

9 // Expand S.8158/A.10740, the landmark legislation mandating that schools across the state test drinking water for lead contamination to cover child care facilities

In 2016, WE ACT along with four other advocacy groups worked with legislators and the Governor's office to pass a bill that requires all New York State schools to test their drinking water for lead contamination. The bill became a national model and in Winter 2017, Northern Manhattan witnessed this bill's power to protect our kids. Several schools in our community were required to test their drinking water and those tests revealed dangerously high levels of lead. WE ACT plans to work with the same group of organizations to determine if we can expand the coverage of that law to include child care facilities.



10 // Parents Right to Know Act Bills TBD

For more than a decade, WE ACT has fought to get toxic chemicals out of children's products, but we were never able to ban the most harmful chemicals (asthmagens, carcinogens, endocrine disruptors, etc.) from children's products in New York because of the influence of the chemical industry and the Republican-led NYS Business Council of the New York State Senate. This year, we propose to advance a bill in Albany that would require companies to disclose if they are using any of the most harmful chemicals in children's products. WE ACT demands that parents in New York State have right to know about the most harmful chemicals in the products they buy for their children, just as the parents in California, Maine, Michigan, and

several other states already do. Toward that end we will look forward to working with Senators David Carlucci (NYS Senate District (38) Rockland/Westchester Counties) and, our very own, Marisol Alcantara (NYS Senate District (31) New York County) in the senate and Assemblyman Brian Kavanagh (NYS Assembly District (74) New York County) in the assembly to introduce a new bill. This bill would amend the State's General Business law to require the state to create a list of chemicals of concern in children's products, based on sound science, and require toy importers and large manufacturers to disclose the presence of chemicals of greatest concern in their children's products before the end of the 2017 legislative session.

11 // NYS Renewable Energy Storage Goal Mandate
Intro TBD

A significant impediment to the renewable energy sector's ability to scale up is the lack of facilities to provide energy storage. Think of it like a giant battery to store excess energy. Communities looking to increase their resiliency to climate change through local, renewable energy sources have struggled to overcome this significant storage hurdle. Only a handful of states have energy storage rules on the books. California has a utility-scale and distributed energy rule that supports the state's efforts to reduce greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change. The rule ultimately allows more renewable energy into California's electric grid. WE ACT demands that NYS develop a mandated energy storage target as a means of reducing both the amount of greenhouse gases contributing to climate change and reducing the amount of co-pollutants, otherwise known as the dirty air produced by dirty fossil fuel power plants that drive the high rates of asthma. To achieve that objective, we will work to find champions in both the NYS Senate and Assembly to introduce bills in both chambers in the 2017-18 legislative session.

12 // Require the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) to address Urban Heat Island

Like CEQRA in New York City, the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) doesn't address the issue of the urban heat island effect. Thus, WE ACT will call upon the Governor to require that SEQRA undergo a regulatory update to require that it address the urban heat island effect and mitigate the worst health impacts of heat waves and excess heat communities of color and low income communities face.

13 // Constitutional Amendment Calling for the Right to Clean Air, Water, and Land

WE ACT will work with the offices of Assemblyman Steve Engelbright NYS Assembly District (4) Setauket and Senator David Carlucci NYS Senate District (38) Westchester/Rockland to advance A.6279/ S.6287 bills which call for an amendment to the NYS Constitution guaranteeing a right to clean air, clean water, and clean land for who live in New York State.

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14 // Dirty Fuel Oil Phase Out at Power Plants

In September of 2016, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights released a report that documented the fact that communities of color and low-income across the country are negatively impacted by power plants. New York City neighborhoods like Astoria, as well as other communities of color and low income communities across New York State, are proof positive of this fact. In 2015, WE ACT worked with Council member Costa Constantinides to advance Local Law 38, which calls for power plants to phase out the use of Number 6 oil in plants. To date, several power plants in people of color and low-income communities across the city have not complied with the law. WE ACT will launch an initiative to demand that the Public Service Commission develop a plan to require all power plants across the state to phase out the use of dirty Number 6 oil and enforce it. When enacted, this plan will help countless communities across the state breathe cleaner air and help the state achieve broader emissions reductions targets.

15 // New York State Climate and Community Protection Act S.8005/A.10342

WE ACT is a member of the NY Renews Coalition a diverse alliance of community-based organizations, environmental justice groups, labor unions, faith groups, business leaders, and other advocates from across the state. NY Renews is calling on Albany to make New York State's climate commitments legally enforceable to ensure accountability, establish a just energy policy, and create clean energy jobs throughout the state.

The legislation, called the New York State Climate and Community Protection Act, puts emphasis on environmental and economic justice. Likewise, it aims to prioritize the safety and health of disadvantaged communities and it seeks to create good jobs and protect workers.

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16 // Defend the Environmental Protection Agency

The actions of the White House and Administrator Scott Pruitt demonstrate a clear desire to reduce the power or eliminate the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), a flagrant disregard for science—especially as it pertains to climate change—and a lack of respect for the rule of law. They have proposed slashing EPA’s budget by 31% and eliminating the Office of Environmental Justice, the Alaska Natives Program, the Brownfields Program, and several grant programs that provide funding to the states. Likewise, the White House has signed an executive order to begin repealing the Clean Power Plan, and they have issued statements pointing to a possible pull out of the Paris Climate Agreement. WE ACT has launched a rapid response initiative (communications, opposition memos to bad bills and legislative riders where possible) to speak out and challenge all the proposed rollbacks and any attempt to dismantle the EPA. WE ACT is also actively engaging in other forms of resistance to the White House’s harmful agenda, for example, our staff is actively engaged in the planning process for the People’s Climate March and we are providing support to many EJ allies in several states to make their voices heard by their federal and state-elected officials. Finally, WE ACT is and will continue to work with allies in the environmental justice and environmental movements to file lawsuits against the White House to prevent harmful rollbacks in environmental laws and regulations.



17 // Federal Asthma Management Plan

In 2012, the Obama administration launched the Coordinated Federal Action Plan to Reduce Racial and Ethnic Asthma Disparities, which combined efforts among federal programs at the community level, and developed collaborative strategies to fill knowledge gaps within existing resources. To date, the White House has not proposed to eliminate the Plan, but the administration’s actions remain unclear. WE ACT, in partnership with the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, Green Door Initiative and Jesus Peoples Against Pollution, is evaluating the efficacy of this action plan in four key states (NY, LA, MI, and MS) with an eye towards proposing federal policy recommendations.

18 // Engage around the Implementation of Chemical Safety Act for the 21st Century

WE ACT worked as part of a national coalition, Safer Chemicals Healthy Families, to reform the national Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) in a way that would provide the strongest protections to communities of color and low-income communities because of the legacy of toxic chemical pollution that they bear. While the new law, called the Chemical Safety Act for the 21st Century, doesn't provide all the protections that we fought for, it nonetheless requires protections for vulnerable populations. The newly installed Trump regime has a well-publicized pro-business preference, and unsurprisingly, has decided to issue executive orders calling for an irreversible rollback on health and safety regulations. WE ACT will fight any efforts to minimize the protections for vulnerable populations under the Chemical Safety Act of the 21st Century by advocating (ex: submit testimony and work on advisory bodies) for the strongest possible regulations in the regulatory implementation process and joining with other allies to sue the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), if necessary.

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