



2020 NEW YORK CITY POLICY AGENDA

Campaigns & Initiatives



EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES TO POWER CHANGE



Improve NYC Cooling Center Program (Intro 1563)

POLICY TYPE: Introduction/Advocacy

STATUS: Committee

PROBLEM:

NYC Cooling Centers are public facilities to which people can go to cool down on an extremely hot day. They are important because they provide a space for anyone to protect themselves against the negative health impacts of heat, especially as the number of extremely hot days increases in frequency and severity due to climate change. However, the Cooling Center program has not been working as well as we would like. Often times, they are hard to find, don't provide food and water, don't have functioning air conditioning, or don't have staff members to help people if they are experiencing heat stress.

SOLUTION:

WE ACT will work with the Chair of the City Council's Environmental Committee Costa Constantinides to ensure a NYC Cooling Center bill will hold the City accountable for providing good quality cool spaces that function properly and provide people with the heat relief they need.



Maximum Allowable Temperature in Buildings

POLICY TYPE: Legislation; Policy Advocacy

STATUS: Proposal

PROBLEM:

As climate change becomes worse, there will be more extremely hot days. Many residents do not have access to air conditioning, or cannot afford air conditioning for their homes, and therefore are forced to live and sleep in dangerously warm indoor temperatures. Currently, it is difficult to require landlords to cool apartments because the infrastructure is not already in place; a majority of apartments are heated by boilers, which don't have cooling capacity.

SOLUTION:

WE ACT is leading the advocacy and policy creation for implementing maximum indoor temperature regulations for apartment homes in New York City. This policy would mirror existing NYC laws that have minimum indoor temperatures of 68F for apartments when the external temperatures dip below 55F. WE ACT's state-level policy advocacy for building electrification will provide the infrastructure needed for landlords to be able to heat and cool homes with one system.

Create a New York City Department of Sustainability and Climate (Intro 1399)

POLICY TYPE: Introduction

STATUS: Laid Over in Committee

PROBLEM:

Climate change will impact New York City's

infrastructure, water supply, health, and energy demand in negative and varied ways. Without intervention, climate change will lead to worse health and death at higher rates due to weather events such as heat waves, hurricanes, and flooding.

SOLUTION:

WE ACT will work with the Chair of the City Council’s Environmental Committee Costa Constantinides to draft a bill founding the NYC Department of Sustainability and Climate. This Department will focus on sustainability and climate resiliency citywide. The Department will launch a permanent advisory committee that will include advisors from the health, housing, and environmental justice sectors.

Solar Farm on Rikers Island (Intro 1591, 1592, 1593)

POLICY TYPE: Legislation

STATUS: Laid Over in Committee

PROBLEM:

New Yorkers know that the time to switch to renewable energy is now, and the more local renewable energy generation we have, the more resilient we’ll be to threats, like Superstorm Sandy, that can knock out more centralized energy – generation plants. Further, a warming climate will increase electricity demand in New York City overall as the increase in demand to power summer cooling will outweigh the decrease in power demand for winter warming needs. The electric system will be increasingly stressed during summer heat waves. Peak loads could increase by 7-12% in the 2020s, 8-15% in the 2050s, and 11-17% in the 2080s. One of the primary limitations on increasing local solar power production in New York City is the limited amount of space with appropriate conditions for solar.

SOLUTION:

Mayor Bill de Blasio has promised to close the Rikers Island complex. WE ACT and allies like New York Communities for Change will lead the charge to transform Rikers into a solar farm. Decommissioning Rikers provides a rare opportunity to build solar at scale within the five boroughs. Further, WE ACT has trained more than 150 residents of Northern Manhattan in solar panel installation, and in 30-hour OSHA for construction, and wants to train former inmates to perform the solar installation. We can help employ those who unfairly struggle to find employment

while promoting climate resilience and clean air in historically disadvantaged neighborhoods. WE ACT will work with City Council’s Environmental Committee Chair Costa Constantinides to advocate for the introductions that advances this concept.



Lead in NYC

POLICY TYPE: Legislation; Policy Advocacy

STATUS: Ongoing

PROBLEM:

Lead exposure can cause damage at any age, but is particularly dangerous for young children. Though lead exposure has been declining in New York City for over a decade, in 2019 the New York City Comptroller’s office identified a severe lack of enforcement for Local Law 1, passed in 2004, which was aimed to eradicate childhood lead poisoning by 2010. The report found that 11,972 children diagnosed with lead exposure (5 mcg/dL or greater), were living in housing and urban development (HUD) apartments that should have been lead-free a long time ago.

SOLUTION:

WE ACT is working with our allies around New York City to fight against this continuing lead exposure crisis in our communities and city. Firstly, WE ACT is a leading member of the New York City Coalition to End Lead Poisoning (NYCCELP), and we anchor a roundtable of the City’s leading lead advocates including Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, NYC League of Conservation Voters, New York Lawyers for the Public

Interest, Cooper Square Committee, and Montefiore Hospital to name a few. The advocates are working on several fronts to ensure that New Yorkers are protected from the scourge of lead poisoning – working with the City Council to improve a multitude of lead prevention bills and advocating for tougher enforcement of the existing lead poisoning prevention law, Local Law 1 of 2004. Further, WE ACT is working with the roundtable groups to draft and advance bills that improve or fill gaps in existing law. Since 2019, the roundtable group has helped get 15 bills passed to improve lead poisoning prevention policies in New York City. There are more to come.



Green Roofs and Solar Requirements (Res 0066; Intros 0276, 1031, 1032, 1606)

POLICY TYPE: Introductions and Resolutions
STATUS: Enacted; Committee

PROBLEM:

New York City is particularly susceptible to climate change related heat events. Since most of the city is made up of non-reflective impervious surfaces such as roads, parking lots, driveways, sidewalks, and roofs that absorb a high percentage of incoming solar radiation, New York City's landscape is warmer than surrounding areas. Activities like driving and running air conditioners can directly raise near-surface air temperatures, which can contribute to the formation of a layer that not only prevents rising air from cooling at the normal rate but also traps air pollution in the air we breathe.

SOLUTION:

To promote climate resilience, reduce the heat island effect, and provide jobs for environmental justice

communities, WE ACT will work to promote a variety of bills and resolutions that pave way for solar and wind installation throughout New York.

Electric School Buses (Intro 0455)

POLICY TYPE: Introduction
STATUS: Laid Over in Committee

PROBLEM:

New York City's school bus system transports about 150,000 students daily. Buses are a primary source of air pollution, and developing children are especially vulnerable to the negative health impacts of poor air quality.

SOLUTION:

The electric school buses legislation proposes to require all new school buses on the road after 2040 be electric, zero-emission vehicles. The legislation also requires existing buses to be replaced or upgraded after 10 years of use. A program to put electric school buses on the road will lead to a significant reduction in particulate matter emissions and promote a safer environment for children to live, play, and learn.

Construction Dust Monitoring (Intro 1667)

POLICY TYPE: Introduction
STATUS: Committee

PROBLEM:

Construction dust is a significant source of indoor and outdoor air pollution. Residents and people who pass by inhale dust from construction, contributing to medical problems such as respiratory illness, asthma, lead poisoning, and cardiovascular illness. Low-income and communities of color are disparately exposed to this source of air pollution as construction increases in our communities.

SOLUTION:

WE ACT will support legislation to monitor levels of dust on construction sites. WE ACT will also continue to partner with other healthy housing advocacy organizations to find effective tools for real-time air monitoring needed to pursue oversight for promoting safe construction dust mitigation practices.



WE ACT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

1854 Amsterdam Avenue, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10031 | 212-961-1000

50 F Street, NW, 8th Floor, Washington, DC 20001 | 202-495-3036

Web: weact.org | Facebook: [weactforej](https://www.facebook.com/weactforej) | Twitter: [weact4ej](https://twitter.com/weact4ej) | Instagram: [weact4ej](https://www.instagram.com/weact4ej)