

Senators introduce sweeping environmental justice bill

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Sens. Cory Booker (D-N.J.) and Kamala Harris (D-Calif.) released legislation yesterday, along with Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.), on environmental justice. Tom Williams/Pool via CNP/Newscom

Senate Democrats introduced a broad environmental justice bill yesterday, adding to other legislation aiming to help disadvantaged communities.

Sens. Kamala Harris (D-Calif.), Cory Booker (D-N.J.) and Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.) introduced the Senate version of the "Environmental Justice for All Act," a companion to sweeping legislation, [**H.R. 5986**](#), drawn up by House Natural Resources Chairman Raúl Grijalva (D-Ariz.) and Rep. Donald McEachin (D-Va.) earlier this year.

The bill would amend the Civil Rights and National Environmental Policy acts to better incorporate environmental justice concerns into government policy.

It would also create additional grants and programs to provide communities of color better access to the outdoors.

The legislation came out of a yearlong collaboration with environmental justice groups launched by Grijalva and McEachin, which involved meetings with community organizations and an online platform that allowed advocates to directly suggest changes to the bill text ([Greenwire](#), Feb. 27).

"Confronting generations of systemic racism to achieve true justice will require us to recognize the role environmental racism has played and redress that by investing in long-term, sustainable environmental justice solutions to center and empower communities that have for far too long been excluded," Harris said in a statement.

Environmental justice has come into focus on Capitol Hill during the 116th Congress, particularly after the slaying of George Floyd sparked protests around the country and the pandemic highlighted disproportionate impacts on communities of color ([E&E Daily](#), June 4).

It's a point of emphasis in the \$350 billion economic justice and infrastructure bill Senate Democrats rolled out earlier this month, and Booker and Duckworth also have their own legislation, [S. 2462](#), aimed at financing rooftop solar for low-income households.

The two senators are co-founders, alongside Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.), of the chamber's first environmental justice caucus.

"For too long, communities of color, indigenous communities and low-income communities have been disproportionately exposed to and harmed by pollution," Booker said in a statement.

"We cannot achieve lasting economic justice or social justice without ensuring environmental justice, and the Environmental Justice for All Act is another important step in continuing the fight to right these wrongs."