ENSURING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FOR ALL

Virginia's environmental justice work is not limited to one particular community, pollution site, or infrastructure project. It is an essential procedural framework and set of actions required to ensure that policies and programs represent and benefit all Virginians and do not cause disproportionate harm to low-income communities and communities of color. Environmental justice work includes ensuring access to clean energy for all, access to safe drinking water for all, preventing disproportionate pollution, and more.

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CURBING UTILITIES' POLITICAL INFLUENCE

Without serious reforms to the incentives at play for legislators, regulators, and investor-owned utilities, ratepayers in Virginia will continuously be overcharged and see an ever-increasing gulf between the amount they pay and the value they get in return. More importantly, without such reforms, more widespread adoption of clean energy sources, stronger environmental protections, and other environmental priorities may never be realized.

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ENSURING ROBUST PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: VIRGINIA'S REGULATORY BOARDS

In view of the important environmental protection role served by Virginia’s independent regulatory boards, the current system should not be constrained or otherwise reduced in scope or authority in any way. While no appointment process is entirely free from political influence, the present system of gubernatorial appointments for specific staggered terms ensures, unless interrupted by unusually timed member appointments, regular turnover in board membership such that each governor will have some, but never complete, control over board composition. It also avoids some of the delays and tradeoffs that could slow or complicate legislative involvement in appointments.

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REFORMING HOW LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS ARE DRAWN

The bipartisan support of substantive reform during the 2019 legislative session marked a giant leap forward to significantly improve the way districts are drawn in Virginia. But there is still a long way to go. The same resolution must be passed again by the 2020 General Assembly and then win Virginia voters’ approval in a statewide referendum in November 2020. And even though this will be the most comprehensive redistricting legislation that has ever passed through a state legislature, this constitutional amendment proposal can still be improved statutorily to further improve the redistricting process before districts are redrawn in 2021.

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