



THE JUST STATES NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the inaugural issue of Just States! At Just Solutions, we believe states are often where the boldest climate justice solutions take root—even when federal policy stalls. State governments have unique powers to shape local environmental standards, fund community-based initiatives, and enact justice-focused legislation. They also help drive national progress by testing ideas and scaling up what works. When done right, these efforts are grounded in the wisdom of frontline communities—centering voices that are too often overlooked in big federal discussions—and can protect frontline communities, reduce pollution, and lead the transition toward a more equitable future.

That's where we come in. Just Solutions convenes advocates, policymakers, and grassroots leaders to share best practices, foster peer learning, and replicate successful strategies across regions. Whether it's connecting you to technical resources or building capacity through training and collective problem-solving, we're here to ensure communities have the tools they need to make tangible change. We offer an ever-growing lineup of [webinars](#), [policy analyses](#), [reports](#), [toolkits](#), [podcasts](#), and [strategy hubs](#)—all designed to support your work in advancing climate justice. If your organization has specific research or policy needs, let us know—we're here to help expand and adapt our resources to best serve frontline communities.

Every other month, Just States will spotlight the innovative campaigns, partnerships, and policies driving environmental justice progress around the country. We'll also share updates on the federal landscape—because when states coordinate, they can influence national debates and secure wins that ripple far beyond their borders.

Thank you for reading, and welcome to the Just States community!

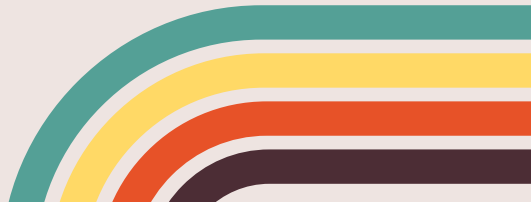


State-Level Solutions

From Just Solutions

In preparation for the outcomes of the 2024 federal election, Just Solutions engaged over 70 leading policy experts from national and state environmental, climate, racial, economic, public health, housing, Indigenous, and immigrant justice organizations to compile policy solutions with the most potential impact given the federal election outcome. This culminated in a collaborative report, [Defending and Advancing Climate Justice Policies](#), designed to address potential challenges to climate and environmental justice in the United States under the current makeup of leadership in Washington, DC. The report also proposes mitigating actions to address these threats, including at the state and local levels, as well as strategic litigation and federal oversight actions. This information is for advocacy-grassroots organizations as they develop and implement their agendas and pathways for action to advance climate justice.

[In a recent trio of policy briefs](#), we highlight how states can seize a vital opportunity to update their residential energy codes, making homes healthier, more affordable, and more resilient in the face of climate change. By adopting the newest standards, states can slash greenhouse gas emissions and improve indoor air quality—especially for historically marginalized communities who often bear the brunt of energy-inefficient housing. The briefs offer policy insights and practical recommendations to help advocates, policymakers, and communities work together to ensure that code improvements deliver equitable benefits and set a foundation for long-term climate resilience.



These and other resources can be found on our [website](#). If your organization has specific research or policy needs, let us know!

From Our Partners

The Pacific Northwest is bursting with climate justice advocacy. In Oregon, [Coalition of Communities of Color](#) and other energy justice advocates secured vital victories at the Oregon Public Utility Commission, including measures to protect low-income customers from disconnection for nonpayment, expand bill discounts for those struggling with high energy bills, and limit rate hikes. In a major step forward, the PUC also required NW Natural—Oregon’s largest gas utility—to begin phasing out line-extension allowances (subsidies that expand the fossil gas system). Although the Commission curbed NW Natural’s proposed rate increases, the fight continues to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and keep energy costs affordable for all.

In Washington, Front & Centered released [Lessons from IVAN-Washington](#), a policy paper born from collaboration with frontline communities, government agencies, and other partners. The report spotlights how fragmented agency responsibilities often leave environmental violations unaddressed and difficult for residents to report. The report recommends a single, statewide tool to streamline reporting, boost accountability, and strengthen community health and equity. Moreover, as the legislative session wraps up, Front & Centered is also advancing budget priorities that meet Washington’s obligations to frontline communities. These proposals include:

- An Environmental Justice Fund to support community-driven EJ solutions beyond the standard two-year budget cycle
- A Statewide Environmental Violations Reporting Tool (as called for in Lessons from IVAN-Washington)
- Funding for Regional and Identity-Based Community Assemblies to guide climate and environmental justice investments

To stay updated or support these advocacy efforts, consider joining Front & Centered’s [mailing list](#).





Events

Looking Back: Highlights from the Michigan Climate & Environmental Justice Briefing

In partnership with the Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition, Just Solutions hosted a Michigan Climate and Environmental Justice Briefing in early March to further our Invest in Our Future project, Michigan Solutions for All. This briefing covered key funding and policy shifts affecting Michigan, including updates on Solar for All, utility affordability efforts, Michigan's Justice40 initiatives, an overview of clean energy tax credits, and important upcoming funding deadlines. It also highlighted community-driven solutions shaping Michigan's climate future. If you missed the webinar, you can still access the presentation slides and engagement opportunities [here](#).

And if you live in Michigan, there will be more opportunities to stay engaged with our work through our upcoming Policy Institute this summer, where we'll explore solutions to communities' most pressing needs. Stay connected with the Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition and Just Solutions for more updates and solutions for Michigan's frontline communities. Visit the Michigan Solutions for All website [here](#), and follow us on social media to stay informed on upcoming events and actions.

Mark Your Calendar: Justice-Focused Webinars Ahead

Join Just Solutions in mid-April for an exciting webinar on the equity and justice implications of transmission buildout. Expanding the electric grid has real consequences for communities—affecting everything from affordability and public health to electricity reliability, land use, and climate impacts. Yet, for many, transmission planning is complex and unfamiliar. We're pulling together key experts on the topic to give a rundown of pressing issues. Keep an eye out for a date and registration link soon!



Policy Pulse: Federal Updates & Opportunities

Over the past few weeks, the Trump Administration has escalated its campaign against federal grants linked to “environmental justice,” “DEI,” and similar programs—suspending, freezing, or outright terminating awards for states, nonprofits, and other recipients. Many environmental justice grantees have received termination letters or noticed that their funds are on hold in the ASAP system. While the Administration is leaning on executive orders attacking Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to justify these moves, courts have already ruled in several cases that such terminations are likely unlawful.

There have been a handful of cases challenging the Administration’s attempts to cancel DEI-related grants, but in [National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education v. Trump](#), a [preliminary injunction](#) blocked the Administration from pausing or terminating obligated grants. However, the Fourth Circuit has [stayed](#) that injunction pending appeal, creating ongoing uncertainty about federal agencies’ actions. Despite these legal obstacles, we anticipate more attempts to sidestep or reinterpret the injunction. We’re monitoring these developments in real-time and encourage grantees to stay vigilant.

Along with partners at the [Climate and Clean Energy Equity Fund](#), we’re preparing a memo on the implications of these anti-DEI executive orders, plus [an explainer on various related orders](#). As soon as new rulings or rules take effect, we’ll share updates and more resources.

Here’s advice from our partners at [Environmental Protection Network](#):

Stay Connected and Informed

- **Update Your Information:** Lawyers for Good Government (L4GG) is gathering the latest updates from grantees via their [intake form](#). By providing your details, you'll receive relevant templates, referrals to pro bono legal and communications support, and possible connections to litigators.
- **Utilize Pro Bono Resources:** L4GG will be offering under-resourced grantees multiple hours of free legal assistance. The Environmental Protection Network (EPN) also offers 1:1 guidance on technical and compliance questions.
- **Join [Webinars and Office Hours](#):** L4GG, EPN, NRDC, Communities First, and others are hosting regular sessions (2nd and 4th Wednesdays, 12:30-2pm ET) covering financial management, procurement, and more—plus targeted sessions for specific grant programs.

Push Back on Suspensions or Terminations

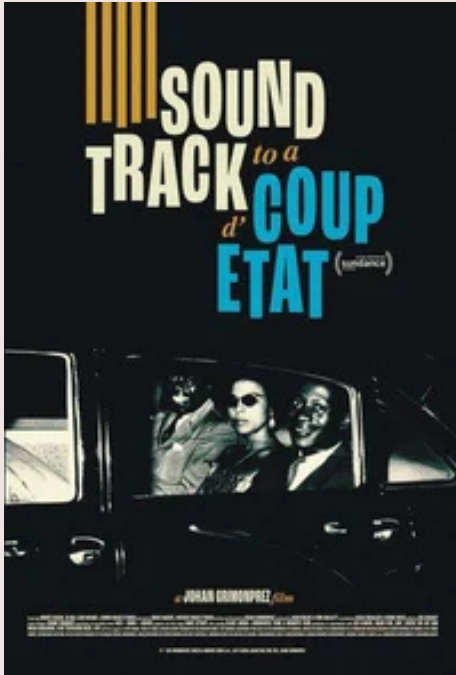
- **Send a Template Letter:** If your funds are frozen (or otherwise held up), consider using L4GG's [draft letter](#) to formally request a resolution from the EPA.
- **Coordinate Legal Strategies:** L4GG and other partners are actively researching ways to respond to unilateral terminations and may have additional guidance soon.

Tell Your Story

- **Contact Local Media:** Sharing how your project benefits communities—creating jobs, reducing pollution, aiding veterans, and more—helps build public support. [EPN](#) can assist with [media prep](#) and outreach strategies.
- **Engage Elected Officials:** Ask your representatives for help. You can use this [sample letter](#) or even meet with members of Congress during their district visits to encourage them to intervene on your behalf.



Books, Podcasts, and More



Soundtrack to a Coup d'État is a new documentary film by director Johan Grimonprez. The film explores the role jazz played in Cold War politics and its influence on global narratives surrounding the 1961 assassination of Patrice Lumumba. If you're interested in jazz, history, culture, and politics, this documentary is worth a watch!

From Crystal Bernard, States Initiatives Associate

The Just Solutions Podcast Episode 17: [Grid Resilience, Reliability, and Equity with Lew Daly](#) is my favorite episode. Lew is such a pleasure to listen to. He both breaks down complex issues and gives you the "big picture".

From Jennifer Moon, Senior Researcher



The Just Solutions Podcast explores climate change from the perspective of Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and those with lower incomes. The Just Solutions Podcast returns this summer – be sure to catch up on our [latest episodes](#).

Sign up for the Just States Newsletter to stay updated on state-level climate policy [here](#).

If you'd like to support the work we are doing to advance justice-centered policies and environmental justice priorities, [please consider donating to our organization](#). Your donation will support our team's ability to conduct research, provide policy analysis, and support our educational programming.

