



2021 CLIMATE JUSTICE AGENDA

MN350 ACTION

Dear Minnesota State Legislator,

Minnesota needs bold action for climate justice. As leaders of MN350 Action, a grassroots climate action group representing 36,000 supporters across the state, we look forward to partnering with you to advance Minnesota's leadership in combating the climate crisis with a just transition to a locally-produced clean energy economy.

Minnesota is known and loved as a state of high environmental integrity - we think it is high time to fully commit to racial and climate justice as the basis of our state's policy. We propose that all environmental policies be reviewed through an equity lens that centers on racial and climate justice. Doing so now makes it possible to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Minnesota by 50% or more by 2030, while moving all regions of Minnesota along just transition pathways that take care of the earth and our communities and work to eradicate long-standing patterns of racial, gender, and economic injustice.

2020 has been a year of hard lessons. Deep racial disparities in the economy and public health have been exposed and worsened due to the COVID crisis. The George Floyd Uprising urges us to be one society where, no matter our background, our law enforcement systems honor and protect all lives equally. While many may assume police-community relations bear no connection to the climate crisis, climate change is a social force that pressures society to respond with greater command and control in vulnerable areas, or ideally with more care and more community. By putting into action now the climate justice agenda we propose here, together we can create an equitable and caring Minnesota that is sustainable for generations to come.

We look forward to seeing you take strong leadership for an abundant future for all Minnesotans. We will reach out to you in the coming days to schedule a meeting about legislative priorities and to facilitate conversations with interested constituents. Our contact information is below.

Sincerely,

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every Minnesotan, regardless of their race, wealth, religion, or region deserves clean air, clean water, a stable climate, and the opportunity to thrive. But for decades fossil fuel corporations have poisoned our communities, putting their profits over our lives and well-being. We are now in a climate justice emergency that requires immediate action to protect Minnesota's environment and to ensure our communities' safety and ability to thrive.

The United Nations IPCC 1.5 C Report and the US National Climate Assessment both call for transformative action in the next 10 years. At the same time, Minnesota has missed its statutory clean energy goals in the bipartisan 2007 Next Generation Energy Act. As a result of long-standing structural barriers, Black, Indigenous, and people of color in Minnesota bear a disproportionate burden of our state's pollution. In just one example cited by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, 91% of Black, Indigenous, and communities of color in Minnesota are likely to be located near areas of air pollution, compared to 32% of Minnesotans on average.

Climate change and racial injustice are interconnected crises. To address them fully they must be confronted together. We ask our state leaders to commit to a bold climate justice agenda that:

- Equitably decarbonizes all sectors of the Minnesota economy by 2040.
- Invests deeply in locally-produced clean energy and energy efficiency while prioritizing communities hit first and worst by the climate crisis: communities of color, low-income communities, communities most impacted by environmental pollution, and communities with high percentages of workers employed in fossil fuel industries.
- Ensures that all state policies have a goal of ending racial, economic, and gender inequality.
- Upholds the State of Minnesota's Treaty responsibilities in all state decisions, public processes, and policies, and recognizes the significant opportunities to partner with the eleven Native Nations in Minnesota to extend environmental integrity and environmental justice.

To achieve a fair and carbon-neutral Minnesota, we propose climate justice strategies here for: Protecting Indigenous Minnesotans; Energy Production and Utilities; Phasing Out Fossil Fuels; Just Transition Planning; Agriculture; Transportation; and Housing. Our transition to 100% clean energy must benefit every Minnesotan, with no exceptions. A core strategy for each sector is to ensure that the communities, workers, and Native Nations most impacted by this transition have a direct role in assessing needs and in developing transition plans.

PROTECT INDIGENOUS MINNESOTANS

The Legislature needs to ensure that not one more Indigenous relative goes missing or is murdered. Creating a safe Minnesota for at-risk communities will provide a more equitable environment for everyone. Currently, there is little statistical data to account for the full scope of the issues which escalate violence against Indigenous communities, as it is grossly under-reported and under-investigated. We do know that Indigenous women are 2 ½ times more likely to suffer violence than any other group in the US. In some parts of Minnesota, the murder rate of Indigenous women is over 10 times higher than anywhere else in the country. Indigenous young people, both in and out of foster care, are more likely to be exploited sexually than other groups in the same age cohort. In areas with sharp increases in temporary workers, such as communities along the Line 3 tar sands pipeline construction route, violent crimes against Indigenous women rise as out-of-area workers with an influx of money exploit them.

As state legislators, we ask that you:

- Appropriate any further funding needs the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force requires so that they can fully investigate the prevalence of violence against Indigenous peoples in Minnesota.
- Follow the recommendations of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force, including ensuring adequate funding for support programs, criminal justice reform, and other recommendations.
- Support and pass legislation that protects or advocates for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives.
- Pass legislation to protect all victims of sex trafficking and provide the support they require.
- Continually review and improve jurisdictional issues between Native Nations and Minnesota state government to ensure timely and effective coordination to protect and defend Native lives.

SUPPORT A TRANSITION TO 100% LOCALLY PRODUCED CLEAN ELECTRICITY AND REFORM OUR UTILITIES TO SERVE OUR STATE'S CLEAN ENERGY GOALS

The science is clear that we must move to utilize 100% clean energy sources over the next 10 years to avoid experiencing the most devastating consequences of the climate crisis. At the same time, communities of color and low-income communities already suffer disproportionate impacts from climate change and our current systems of energy generation.

As state legislators, we ask that you:

- Support and act on the priorities in the Minnesota House Climate Action Caucus' Climate Action Plan.
- Pass into law the Energy Conservation and Optimization (ECO) Act, which will create jobs and lead to cost savings for energy consumers.
- Support legislation to move Minnesota to 100% clean energy by 2030 (excluding nuclear power and trash incineration sources such as the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center), while maintaining the state's energy independence.
- Pass into law the legislation known as the Minnesota Green New Deal.
- Support the development of community solar and other local clean energy programs, including solar on schools programs, with priority in under-resourced communities and communities most impacted by air pollution.
- Support legislation to ensure that the Public Utilities Commission moves aggressively to implement the state's climate goals in ways that are transparent, equitable, and accountable.
- Support a requirement to conduct a Cumulative Impact Assessment whenever new energy infrastructure is approved, in order to identify historical impacts and mitigate potential future impacts on surrounding communities.

PHASE-OUT ALL FOSSIL FUEL EXTRACTION, AND RELATED TRANSPORTATION AND COMMERCE

As Minnesota moves to 100% clean energy and clean transportation, our state must commit to a full phase-out of fossil fuels.

As state legislators, we ask that you:

- Honor the state's Treaty responsibilities and protect our state's resources by opposing the construction of the Enbridge Line 3 pipeline.
- Institute a moratorium on any new permits for major fossil fuel infrastructure projects, including Xcel Energy's Sherco plant and Minnesota Power's Nemadji Trail Energy Center.
- Phase out the transportation of fossil fuels in or across Minnesota.
- Allow landowners and communities to have old crude oil pipelines removed and remediated.
- Protect retirees by divesting state pension funds from fossil fuel companies.
- Document the history of resource extraction in Minnesota and the extent to which the impacts from this have been unduly placed on Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and poor communities; assess the loss and damage incurred by these communities and compensate for the harm caused.
- Prevent the need to protest fossil fuel extraction by making sure that 2020 was the last year any fossil fuel infrastructure was approved.
- Assess impact of fossil-fuel development on Minnesota's Treaty lands, including ceded territory, and commit to co-management paradigm between state government and Native Nations to protect both keystone species and keystone cultures.
- Protect Minnesotans' right to protest in all cases and particularly in cases where the government fails to protect climate integrity.

PROVIDE A JUST TRANSITION TO A LOCALLY-PRODUCED, CLEAN ENERGY ECONOMY

The state must plan for and address the needs of frontline communities - those who suffer disproportionately from climate change and pollution as well as workers and communities whose livelihoods will be affected as Minnesota and the nation move away from fossil fuels.

As state legislators, we ask that you:

- Support an assessment of how Minnesota must undertake a just transition. This includes workforce development and training needed for clean energy jobs; the needed salary assistance and protection of retirement benefits for fossil fuel workers during the transition to clean energy jobs; and an analysis of the economic costs of restoration and economic development of frontline communities.
- Develop proposals to cover the funding for both just transition planning and remedies for dislocation, job or economic loss, restoration, and re-employment.
- Ensure that workers and communities impacted by this transition have a direct role in the assessment and in developing transition plans. This also involves investing first and most significantly in low-income and BIPOC communities according to the needs and desires specific communities have expressed.
- Make investments in energy efficiency in ways that create jobs and shared prosperity, such as updating the Minnesota Building and Energy Codes and funding the retrofitting and upgrade of existing structures for efficiency and resilience.

CREATE LOCAL, REGENERATIVE, EQUITABLE FOOD SYSTEMS ACROSS MINNESOTA

From soil to processing to transport to waste, the industrial food system is responsible for nearly one-third of all human-caused greenhouse gas emissions - about the same amount as the energy sector. The industrial food system paid for with our tax dollars is an extractive economy that is built for profit, not nourishment. In addition, while energy can be produced without emissions, the food system has the potential to go even farther: it can be used to pull carbon from the atmosphere. Our vision is a just transition to a food system that is local, regenerative, equitable toward all who depend on it, and mindful of its impact on future generations. We are building a movement behind the Headwaters Community Food & Water Bill, which would provide public funding and policies to reverse the impacts of the industrial food chain. This bill: builds on the knowledge, skills, and foods generated by Indigenous communities for thousands of years; meets the demands of water, food, and climate with a regenerative economy; and, is designed to connect urban and rural communities throughout Minnesota.

As state legislators, we ask that you:

- Pass the Headwaters Community Food & Water Bill, creating an inclusive economic resiliency program designed for sustainable living and providing the public investment and policies needed to maintain it.
- Ensure that workers and communities impacted by this transition have a direct role in the assessment and in developing transition plans.
- Support the undertaking of a comprehensive statewide assessment of our local capacity to source, preserve, deliver, and store food within our communities.
- Assess the significant challenges in land access and access to markets for emerging farmers and for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) farmers.
- Commit the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to a strategic plan that documents how to both reduce emissions from agriculture and greatly increase opportunities for BIPOC farmers to have a significant stake in the future of Minnesota agriculture, including targeted financing and technical assistance for BIPOC farmers.

ELIMINATE MINNESOTA'S GREENHOUSE GAS (GHG) EMISSIONS FROM THE TRANSPORTATION SECTOR BY 2040

Transportation is Minnesota's largest source of GHG emissions. Vehicle emissions are responsible for up to an estimated 4,000 annual deaths in the Twin Cities alone, and disproportionately affect the young, old, low-income, and communities of color in Minnesota. Eliminating the deaths and public health costs related to vehicle emissions requires an accelerated switch to zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs), and smart growth policies and programs for land use, housing, transportation, and infrastructure. By prioritizing investments statewide in public transit and ZEVs, Minnesota can establish high-quality mobility options for every Minnesotan, eliminate greenhouse gas and air pollution, and enhance economic opportunity in low-income communities and communities of color.

As state legislators, we ask that you:

- Develop and implement plans to accelerate the adoption of ZEV including cars, buses, trucks, and delivery vehicles – through incentives and moving swiftly to phase in an internal combustion engine ban to reach a 100% carbon neutral transportation sector in Minnesota by 2040.
- Incentivize and implement comprehensive infrastructure statewide to support the full adaptation of zero-emission vehicles, with priority in communities most impacted by air pollution from vehicle emissions and under-resourced communities.
- Fund accessible and affordable (no fare for people at 30% or less of AMI) public transportation statewide, with priority in communities most impacted by air pollution from vehicle emissions and under-resourced communities.
- Decriminalize fare evasion on public transit.
- Provide rebates for electric school buses, with priority in communities most impacted by air pollution from vehicle emissions and under-resourced communities.
- Support adopting Low-Emission Vehicle and Zero-Emission Vehicle (Clean Cars Minnesota) air pollution standards.
- Develop and implement statewide plans to monitor air quality, with priority in communities most impacted by air pollution from vehicle emissions and under-resourced communities.
- Ensure that transit riders and communities impacted by this transition have a direct role in the assessment and in developing transition plans.

PROVIDE TRULY AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR EVERY MINNESOTAN WHO NEEDS IT

As the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates the already-existing housing crisis in Minnesota, it is the responsibility of the state to make sure that everyone has access to safe, affordable housing as we move to decarbonize the housing sector. Housing makes up 1/6 of all carbon emissions in the United States, and another 1/6 for people traveling to and from their homes. To meet the state's emission reduction goals, the housing sector must be decarbonized on an accelerated timeline, while prioritizing well-paying jobs and affordable rents.

As state legislators, we ask that you:

- Advocate for a homes guarantee and rent cancellation, and expand funding for public housing wherever possible.
- Invest in housing decarbonization and the construction of new housing that is truly affordable (30% AMI) and carbon-free, with a commitment to paying family-sustaining wages and good working conditions for the people that are constructing them.
- Support strong state laws and policies that incentivize carbon-neutral public housing development readily accessible to public transit while protecting against the displacement of low-income residents.
- Ensure that renters, public housing residents, and communities impacted by this transition have a direct role in the assessment of needs and in developing transition plans.