



# WE ACT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

## 2024-2025 IMPACT REPORT

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## FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



WE ACT for Environmental Justice has earned our place as one of the most recognized and respected voices in the environmental justice movement. With more than 1,100 members, we are a community-based organization headquartered in Harlem, serving all of Northern Manhattan, a section of New York City that includes Harlem, Washington Heights, and Inwood.

Since our founding in 1988 by Peggy Shepard, Vernice Miller-Travis, and the late Chuck Sutton, we have advocated for equitable environmental programs and policies in New York City and State. In 2012, WE ACT established an office in Washington, DC to advance the federal policy needs and interests of the Northern Manhattan communities we serve - which can also benefit environmental justice communities across the nation. Similar to our New York Policy team, our Federal Policy Office works with lawmakers, agencies, and other organizations to advocate for environmental justice legislation and poli-

cies informed by and on behalf of the communities we represent.

WE ACT is the only environmental justice organization based outside of Washington, DC that maintains a permanent office there. In addition, we coordinate the Environmental Justice Leadership Forum, a national coalition of 40 environmental justice organizations from across 23 states working together to advance climate justice and impact policy to ensure the health and well-being of communities.

While we continue to successfully advocate for policies and programs at the city and state levels, with some of our most recent wins featured in this report, the new administration in Washington, DC is aggressively undermining the progress we – and the broader movement – have made at the federal level. The next four years will prove to be a challenge for the environmental justice movement, and WE ACT in particular.

This hostile administration is waging a war on





equity, and attempting to erase environmental and climate justice from federal government agencies – including the decades of progress we have made to ensure that these issues are ingrained in the federal regulatory fabric. We are also seeing the Trump administration start to attack our state policies, and make threats to intervene at the city level as well.

Just as we did during the previous Trump presidency, we will resist this multi-front attempt to purge environmental justice. We will work with our allies to defend every rule this administration attempts to roll back. We will continue to pursue state and city legislation that advances environmental justice interests, and help others do the same. And we will work together to hold the federal administration publicly – and, whenever possible, legally – accountable for the damage it does to our environment and our communities.

Our resilience and pushback during that first term helped our movement rebound, stronger than ever. Nearly all of those rollbacks were eventually restored, and the next administration embraced environmental and climate justice in unprecedented ways – including implementing the Justice40 initiative, funding from the Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Environmental Protection Agency’s Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Center program, and more. And while this current administration has terminated federal grants, including two of WE ACT’s, we will continue the vital work we do and call on allies in the private sector to step up their support for organizations like ours. We won’t go back!

Peggy Shepard  
Co-Founder & Executive Director  
WE ACT for Environmental Justice

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IS



The “fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, culture, education, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.”

We know from the lived experience of our members and countless scientific studies that people of color and low-income face greater exposure to pollution, toxic chemicals, and other environmental hazards, which leads them to suffer disproportionately higher incidence of adverse health impacts. Race is the most significant factor in determining the burden of pollution, even beyond income.

Our work is to achieve democracy and build power and capacity for community groups to attain a justice-centered vision and plan for a sustainable city, state, and national environment.

## WE ACT’S MISSION

WE ACT for Environmental Justice is a 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1988 that serves Harlem, Washington Heights, and Inwood – which we refer to as Northern Manhattan. We have more than 1,100 members and advocate for change at the city, state, and – with our office in Washington, DC – federal levels.



WE ACT’s mission is to build healthy communities by ensuring that people of color and low-income in Northern Manhattan participate meaningfully in the creation of sound and fair environmental health and protection policies and practices. We strive to ensure that our community has:

- informed and engaged residents who participate fully in decision-making on key issues that impact their health and community;
- strong and equal environmental protections; and
- improved environmental health through community-based participatory research and evidence-based campaigns.

## WE ACT'S THEORY OF CHANGE

Change begins with community organizing and action. And effective, lasting change requires a community that is informed, engaged, organized, and active. Building on the experiences and interactions with community residents, along with data from our academic partners, we develop policies and practices with our members to address the environmental issues impacting

Northern Manhattan and beyond. In fact, we have become recognized for our track record of success in passing legislation at the city, state, and federal levels. And we continue to share that expertise with others seeking environmental and climate justice, to strengthen and advance the movement across the country.



## A COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION

As a community-based organization, we work with residents of Northern Manhattan to identify environmental concerns and develop practical solutions to address these issues as well as the systemic racism that fuels them. We learn from our members' lived experiences and use our staff expertise and the insights of our academic partners, often conducting community-based participatory research, to educate our neighbors and elected officials about environmental issues impacting the community. We

utilize tools like webinars, workshops, and our award-winning Environmental Justice Leadership Training program. We train residents to become advocates for themselves and their community, and to realize their own power to create lasting change – whether through testimony at City Hall or meeting with State legislators during our Albany advocacy days. We meet with our members monthly, and have a number of working groups in which members engage in our work and focus on specific areas of interest.

# FROM OUR MEMBERS

We have more than 1,100 members, primarily based in the Northern Manhattan communities we serve. Our members help inform and advance our work through their lived experiences and grassroots advocacy.



"I became involved with WE ACT for Environmental Justice in 2013 after making a career change from Film & Television. Looking for a meaningful outlet to explore environmental and food justice issues, the fact that I can be directly involved to help pass legislation as a member builds skills and furthers my career path."

- Liz McMillian,  
WE ACT Membership Planning  
Committee Member

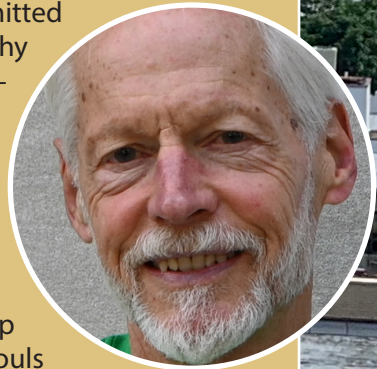
"I got involved with WE ACT because of the threat the 99th Street Sanitation Depot posed to my East Harlem neighborhood. But the work the organization does, and the opportunities for community members like me to help advance that work, is what has kept me involved all these years later."

- Jewel Jones,  
WE ACT  
Member



"As a member of WE ACT for Environmental Justice, I benefit greatly from engaging with my Northern Manhattan neighbors committed to securing a healthy planet for our children and healthy living conditions for all New Yorkers - not just a privileged minority. WE ACT offers a unique fellowship of warm-hearted souls who hail from a fascinating variety of backgrounds. I always come away from our gatherings with renewed hope, and with new resolve to be a more effective advocate for people and planet in our deeply troubled times."

- David Vassar,  
WE ACT Member



# FOCUS AREAS



## Civic Engagement

An active, informed, organized, and engaged community is essential to achieve environmental justice. WE ACT organizes and educates the communities of Northern Manhattan to ensure they participate in elections and other pathways to power. Our Northern Manhattan Climate Action Plan, East Harlem Community Visioning Plan, Climate Ready Uptown Now Plan, and annual Candidate Forums and Get Out the Vote efforts serve as examples of this work.

## Climate Justice

Communities of color and low-income experience the impacts of the climate crisis first and worst, despite contributing the least amount of the greenhouse gas emissions that fuel climate change. WE ACT is working to ensure that these communities can benefit from equitable climate adaptation and mitigation efforts so that they are no longer overburdened by the climate crisis. We call this climate justice. Some highlights of this work are the All Electric Building Acts we



passed at the City and State, our Federal Wrong Direction campaign to call attention to false energy solutions, and our campaign to address extreme heat, the deadliest impact of climate change, which included the codifying of New York City’s Cooling Center program.

### WE ACT’s Green Institute: Workforce Development

Today’s high poverty and unemployment rate in Northern Manhattan is caused by decades of poor and often racist public policy around jobs, housing, homeownership, education, policing, and more. Climate change exacerbates these challenges, widening existing social and economic inequalities in our communities.

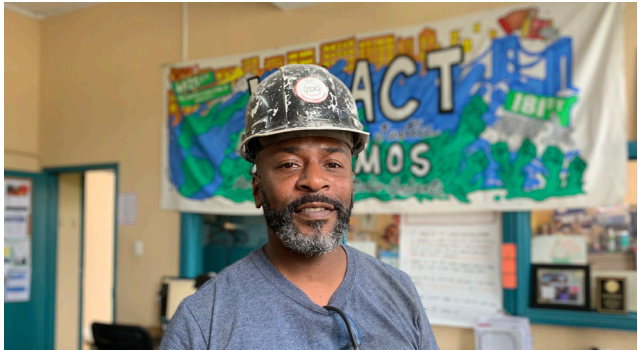
In 2023, WE ACT rebranded its workforce development program, launching WE ACT’s Green Institute. The mission remains the same: training and connecting local residents to good paying jobs in the green economy. What’s changed is the depth and breadth of the program, expanding the services offered as well as the opportunities available. In addition to providing the

entry-level and advanced certification required for employment in the construction industry, we are now focused on ensuring our graduates find and retain these jobs, building green careers.

### Energy Justice

Energy affordability has reached a crisis level in New York State. More than 1.4 million New Yorkers struggled to pay their energy bills last winter. Disadvantaged New Yorkers – particularly people of color and low-income – face the greatest burden because they are required to spend, on average, a disproportionate amount of their household income on energy bills. On top of that, they are more likely to live in older, less energy-efficient homes that require more energy to heat and cool – raising their energy bills even higher. Many of these homes are plagued with issues such as lead paint, mold, and pests. These households are not eligible for the State’s energy efficiency and clean energy transition programs because the programs do not cover the cost of remediation required to do this work.

To help our communities address these issues, we manage the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority’s Manhattan Clean Energy Hub, which provides local tenants, landlords, and small businesses access to low- and no-cost renewable energy upgrades that improve indoor air quality and reduce utility costs. And through our advocacy in 2025, we helped save New Yorkers more than \$200 million annually by repealing the New York State’s 100-foot rule - pending the Governor’s signature.



## Environmental Health & Toxic-Free

People of color are disproportionately exposed to a variety of toxic chemicals. That is why we have been conducting research, raising awareness, and advocating for policies to address the exposure to toxic chemicals and other environmental health hazards in our communities. Examples include passing a New York State ban on the sale of skin lighteners that contain mercury, and we are awaiting the Governor’s signature on our bill to ban PFAS and other toxic chemicals from menstrual products sold in the state – legislation that passed both chambers of the State legislature unanimously!

## Healthy Homes & Healthy Communities

Studies show that communities of color and low-income are disproportionately exposed to air pollution from nearly every single source, despite being responsible for generating the least



amount of air pollution. Our work to build stronger, healthier, and more resilient communities dates back to our founding.

Today, we are working to improve the health and well-being of all of the communities in Northern Manhattan. Americans spend approximately 90 percent of their time indoors, so we focus on improving indoor air quality as well. Our Out of Gas, In with Justice pilot program confirmed that indoor air pollution can be significantly reduced by replacing gas stoves with electric induction stoves. Our Federal Policy team is continuing this work with a Healthy Homes First campaign designed to raise awareness about indoor air pollution. And we are actively engaging in the rule-making process for New York State’s Environmental Justice Siting Law, the landmark legislation that now requires New York State to consider the cumulative impacts of pollution sources in a community when evaluating permits.

## Movement Building: Federal Policy Office

Although we are based in Harlem, we established an office in Washington, DC in 2012 to advance the federal policy needs and interests of the Northern Manhattan community. Our Federal Policy Office works with lawmakers, agencies,





and other organizations to advocate on behalf of environmental justice legislation and policies. We have a long track-record of successfully impacting federal legislation over the years, as well as working to advance environmental justice at the national level. WE ACT remains the only environmental justice organization based outside Washington, DC that maintains a permanent presence there.

### Movement Building: The Environmental Justice Leadership Forum

We engage, educate, and organize communities to advance environmental justice and develop the next generation of leaders for this movement. We also work to build a stronger movement across the country, and around the world. We facilitate the Environmental Justice Leadership Forum, a national coalition of 40 environmental justice organizations across 23 states working together to advance climate justice and impact policy to ensure the health and well-being of communities. Members of the Forum have been active in Clean Air for the Long Haul, a national cohort of environmental justice organizations that has been working to raise awareness of outdoor air pollution via its Dare to Breathe

campaign as well as demanding stronger federal regulations and enforcement of air pollution regulations in both the power and transportation sectors.



## WE ACT's Environmental Justice Center: Building a Home for the Movement

WE ACT owns a five-story, brick and limestone townhouse in the Hamilton Heights Historic District in West Harlem. We have launched a \$7.3 million campaign to completely renovate and transform the building into a state-of-the-art, community-based Environmental Justice Center.

The WE ACT Environmental Justice Center will strengthen our ability to serve as a movement-builder, sharing our knowledge, experience, and best practices, along with capacity-building resources, including funding, with allies across the country. It will be a convening space and technical assistance hub for environmental justice organizations and other grassroots advocates. Equipped with the technology for Science, Technology, Energy, Arts, and Math (STEAM) education and citizen science, the Center will enable us to scale up our community-based education, workforce development, and civic engagement efforts that directly empower Northern Manhattan residents.



## Environmental Health & Justice Leadership Training Program

Our award-winning Environmental Health and Justice Leadership Training (EHJLT) program introduces WE ACT members to environmental justice, environmental health, community organizing, and campaign work to prepare more leaders from Northern Manhattan for advocacy work. After completing the training, participants of the EHJLT are equipped with the knowledge and tools needed to organize campaigns or projects for WE ACT or broader environmental justice initiatives on their own. We also regularly work with schools and youth programs to provide tailored training for students seeking to get involved in the work we do. Since launching the program in 2016, we have provided this training to more than 800 individuals.

# WE ACT'S RECENT IMPACTS

## NEW YORK CITY IMPACTS

### 2025 – Codifying the Cooling Center Program

As part of the Extreme Heat Coalition, and building on years of advocacy by our members, we helped get Local Law 128 of 2025 passed by the New York City Council on August 14, 2025. The bill codifies the City's Cooling Center program, making it a permanent part of its response to extreme heat events. It requires the City's Office of Emergency Management to designate cooling center locations based on factors like heat vulnerability index and population density to ensure equitable access. It also requires the City to develop and implement a communications plan to ensure New Yorkers are aware of the benefits of these facilities as well as their locations and hours of operation. Extreme heat is the deadliest impact of climate change, and Black New Yorkers are twice as likely to die from heat-related illness according to the City's data.

### 2024 – EJNYC Report & Mapping Tool

The New York City Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice released the EJNYC Report and Mapping Tool in April 2024. It is a comprehensive assessment of the environmental justice issues impacting communities throughout the city.

We strongly advocated for Local Laws 60 and 64 of 2017, which required the city to develop this report and mapping tool – along with establishing New York City's Environmental Justice Advi-

sory Board, chaired by our Co-Founder & Executive Director Peggy Shepard. The report was informed by comments from more than 1,000 New Yorkers, organizations, and elected officials on the climate, environmental, and health issues that impact their communities. Nearly 70 percent of the survey participants came from environmental justice communities, including many of our own members.

These laws also required the City to develop a comprehensive, citywide plan – the EJNYC Plan – to address the environmental justice issues identified in this report. Engaging with the residents of New York's environmental justice communities, those who are most impacted by these issues, will be critical in developing effective, equitable solutions. And WE ACT is working with Mayor's Office of Climate & Environmental Justice on a citywide outreach effort to engage communities and get their input for the plan.

## NEW YORK STATE IMPACTS

### 2025 – Banning PFAS and Other Toxic Chemicals from Menstrual Products

On March 26th, 2025, as part of the JustGreen Partnership, we helped pass the Ban on PFAS and Toxic Chemicals Bill, which will regulate the sale and distribution in New York State of menstrual products (pads, tampons, liners, sponges, etc.) that contain restricted substances or unsafe chemicals, including PFAS "forever chemicals," heavy metals like lead and mercury, hormone disrupting parabens, and carcinogens like formaldehyde and toluene.



Women and femmes of color are already disproportionately exposed to toxic chemicals in their lived environment, and even more so from beauty products that are marketed towards them. One way to reduce this dangerous exposure is to ban toxic chemicals in period products, which pose a heightened risk given their use in sensitive areas of the body as well as their duration of use. This crucial legislation for menstruators' health will prohibit the use of chemicals such as PFAS, talc, lead, synthetic fragrances, and so many more. These toxins are closely linked to cancer outcomes, contribute to fertility and reproductive challenges, reduce immune function, and interfere with hormones.

Governor Kathy Hochul signed this bill into law on December 19th, 2025. New York now joins California, Maine, and Vermont in restricting PFAS in menstrual products, and go beyond these states by restricting other harmful chemicals.

## 2025 – Saving \$200 million per Year by Repealing the 100-Foot Rule

On June 18th, 2025, as part of the Renewable Heat Now coalition, we helped pass legislation that eliminates the 100-foot rule, which is a provision of the New York State Public Service Law that had required utilities to cover the cost of new gas service to any building or home within 100 feet of an existing gas main. This subsidy to gas pipeline operations costs \$200 million per year, which was paid for by ratepayers across the state. Under this new legislation, which amends the Public Service Law, a utility will still be obligated to provide gas service to any building within 100 feet of an existing gas main but only if the building requests gas service and agrees to pay for the material and installation costs of that gas line. The Governor signed this bill into law on December 19th, 2025. We will continue

to advocate for equitable energy affordability measures as the state transitions to clean, renewable energy as mandated by the New York State Climate Act.

## 2025 – Legal Victory to Defend the New York State Climate Act

We were among the plaintiffs in a lawsuit against the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for failing to issue the regulations required by law, under the New York State Climate Act (originally known as the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, or CLCPA). We were part of a coalition that helped pass this landmark climate law in 2019, setting aggressive goals for the state to reduce economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent by 2030 and 85 percent by 2050 from 1990 levels.

The DEC was required to finalize regulations for this by January 1st, 2024. After a year of failing to comply, the DEC announced in January 2025 that the draft regulations it had been promising would not be released that year, nor would they specify a date when it would comply.



Without comprehensive regulations in place, New York does not currently have a pathway to achieve the steep greenhouse gas reductions the law requires by 2030. So, in March 2025, WE ACT joined Citizen Action of New York, PUSH Buffalo, and the Sierra Club – and represented by Earthjustice, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, and the Pace Environmental Litigation Clinic – in filing a lawsuit urging the Albany County Supreme Court to order the release of overdue regulations. On October 24th, 2025, the court ruled in our favor, ordering the DEC to issue these regulations no later than by February 6th, 2026.

## 2025 – Secured \$2 Million for Pre-Electrification Pilot Program

Low-income households often face the biggest barriers to energy efficiency, weatherization, and electrification due to living in older housing stock with deferred maintenance that prevents basic energy upgrades to make homes more affordable, comfortable, and healthy. For example, homes that have environmental health hazards like lead, mold, and asbestos – or other code violations – will have to resolve these issues before they can qualify for energy efficiency or electrification interventions. This pre-electrification work is usually too costly for homeowners and building owners to take on themselves and is not currently funded by existing state programs.

In May 2025, as part of New York State’s final budget, the Green Affordable Pre-Electrification (GAP) Fund was funded as a \$2 million pilot. This falls well-short of the funding needed to address barriers to pre-electrification across the state, but it is still something we had been advocating for. We will continue to push to make this pilot permanent and for the fund to receive a substantial and durable investment from the state, prioritizing spending in low-income communities and communities of color.

## 2025 – Helping Enforce Law Banning Mercury from Cosmetics

On October 8th, 2025, the New York State Attorney General’s Office took action to address the illegal sales of skin lighteners that contain mercury, a dangerous neurotoxin. Three years ago, we helped pass a law banning the sale of mercury in cosmetics – in-store or online – in New York State.

However, our staff still spotted skin lightening products that they suspected contained mercury being sold online. We obtained some samples, had them tested, and confirmed that they did in fact contain mercury – up to 29,000 times more than the legal limit.

We shared this with the New York State Attorney General’s office, who did their own investigation and testing, and took action against three com-

panies – sending a strong message to manufacturers and retailers of these harmful products, both here and abroad.

## 2024 – Identifying Lead Water Pipes

We worked with the JustGreen Partnership and Lead Free Kids New York to pass the Lead Pipe Right to Know Act in 2024. This new law requires public water systems to take inventory of the service lines – the water pipes – in their system to identify which ones contain or may contain lead. This is an important win in the fight against childhood lead poisoning, given that New York State leads the nation in cases of children with elevated blood levels.

## 2023 – Banning Gas in New Construction: All Electric Building Act

Air pollution from buildings burning fossil fuels leads to nearly 2,000 premature deaths each year across New York State. That is why we built on our success in banning gas in new buildings constructed in New York City to pass a similar law statewide, the All Electric Building Act, which Governor Kathy Hochul signed into law in May 2023. Beginning in 2026, new buildings seven stories and under must be built all electric, and beginning in 2029 for taller buildings. We will continue to monitor implementation to ensure the state takes the required actions to enforce the law.

## 2022 – Cumulative Impacts Legislation: Environmental Justice Siting Law

WE ACT worked in a coalition with advocates across the state to convince New York State Governor Kathy Hochul to sign the Cumulative Impacts bill into law on December 31, 2022. This landmark environmental justice legislation



ensures that cumulative impacts are taken into consideration in the State’s environmental planning and permitting processes when potentially polluting facilities seek permits in disadvantaged communities. It’s a historic move, making New York the second state in the nation with such a law, following New Jersey’s groundbreaking legislation signed in 2020.

Low-income communities and communities of color throughout New York State have historically been burdened by a disproportionate number of pollution-generating facilities such as factories, power plants, bus depots, sewage treatment plants, garbage dumps and transfer stations, and trucking centers. Inequitable siting decisions have turned these communities into environmental sacrifice zones, with the cumulative impacts of multiple sources of pollution exponentially harming residents, causing health impacts such as asthma, lung and heart disease, increased birth defects, and learning impairments. Existing laws and regulations did not take the cumulative impacts of pollution into account when approving such facilities, instead treating them as if they were the only source of

pollution that residents would have to endure. The bill, officially known as the Environmental Justice Siting Law, is considered landmark legislation that will address the environmental racism that has plagued the health and well-being of these communities for generations.

## 2022 – Banning Mercury from Skin Lightening Products

Working with the JustGreen Partnership, we encouraged New York State Governor Kathy Hochul to sign the Mercury Out of Cosmetics bill into law on December 23, 2022. This law bans the sale – both in-store and online – of cosmetics and other personal care products that contain mercury. Despite being a persistent neurotoxin that can cause kidney damage, psychosis, and peripheral neuropathy among other adverse effects, mercury is still used as a preservative in creams designed to lighten skin color. A global industry estimated to be worth \$32.1 billion in 2024, skin lighteners and whiteners are marketed almost exclusively to people of color, based on the perpetuation of racist beauty standards. As a result of inconsistencies in the labeling of ingredients, most users are unaware that they are applying this highly toxic substance directly to their skin. And entire families, including children and seniors, can be exposed through contact with someone using these products.

## FEDERAL IMPACTS 2025 – Keeping LIHEAP Alive with a \$20 Million Increase

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a federally-funded and state-implemented program designed to assist eligible low-income households with their heating and cooling costs, energy crisis assistance, weather-





ization, and energy-related home repairs. LIHEAP has been a chronically underfunded program even though it can and does save lives. And despite the Trump administration’s attempt to defund the entire program, our advocacy helped secure a \$20 million increase in LIHEAP funding for fiscal year 2026 over what was appropriated for fiscal year 2025.

## 2024 – Pausing LNG Export Infrastructure

While the Biden administration advanced environmental and climate justice, we opposed (and were among the first to do so) its support for liquified natural gas (LNG) and the permitting of infrastructure – pipelines, refineries, and ports – constructed to support the export of this fossil fuel. Not only does such infrastructure encourage the continued use of fossil fuels, but most of these projects are being built in communities of color and low-income (primarily in the Gulf Coast) already devastated by the environmental impacts of petroleum, natural gas, and petrochemical facilities. Moreover, the pollution they produce exacerbates health conditions in these communities.

Our advocacy helped convince the Biden administration to pause the permitting of pending and future LNG infrastructure. During this pause, the Department of Energy reviewed these projects to gauge their economic and environmental impact on local communities. President Biden said in a statement that “during this period, we will take a hard look at the impacts of LNG exports on energy costs, America’s energy security, and our environment,” adding that he “sees the climate crisis for what it is: the existential threat of our time.” Unfortunately, the new administration has chosen to ignore the dangers of LNG, ramping up production and exports while working to make permitting easier for the industry.

## 2024 – Strengthening Federal Rules for Cleaner Air

As a convener of Clean Air for the Long Haul, a nationwide coalition of environmental justice groups working together to win major federal emissions reductions in the power and transportation sectors, we have been advocating for

regulatory protections and improvements to air quality in our communities. Earlier that year, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s regulations lowering air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from the power sector. These included rules to curb methane emissions from oil and gas operations, mercury and other toxic air pollutants from coal-fired power plants, and greenhouse gases from existing coal and new gas power plants. We had successfully advocated to strengthen these rules, especially the methane and mercury and air toxic standards. Unfortunately, the Trump administration is seeking to undermine these rules and reduce protections in both the power and transportation sectors.

## GLOBAL IMPACTS 2025 – Phasing Out Mercury from Dental Amalgam

Having helped to successfully advocate for the adoption of an amendment to the treaty to phase-out mercury from cosmetics at the United Nations’ COP5 Minamata Convention on Mercury in 2023, we attended COP6 in 2025 to help phase out mercury-containing dental amalgam by 2034. Dental amalgam is a cavity filling containing 50-percent mercury and is primarily used in low-income communities and communities



of color. The Convention also strengthened the ban on manufacturing, importing, and exporting of mercury-added cosmetics, calling on the Minamata Secretariat to identify countries with challenges establishing and enforcing the bans and assist in bridging these gaps. It also loops in the World Customs Organization, Interpol, and other international organizations to investigate the illegal trade of these products.

## 2023 – Phasing Out Mercury from Cosmetics

At the Minamata Convention on Mercury hosted by the United Nations in 2023, we helped successfully advocate for the adoption of an amendment to the treaty that will phase-out mercury from cosmetics by 2025. As you may recall, we successfully banned mercury – a dangerous neurotoxin found in many skin lighteners – from cosmetics in New York State in 2022, but this global ban will help reduce the prevalence of cosmetics containing mercury that still find their way onto our store shelves from overseas as well as those being sold online.

## 2022 – Climate Justice Pavilion at COP27

WE ACT for Environmental Justice, the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, and the Bullard Center for Environmental and Climate Justice at Texas Southern University co-hosted the first-ever Climate Justice Pavilion inside the Blue Zone at COP27, the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference, in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt. The pavilion convened representatives from the Global South, the U.S. Environmental Justice Movement, and Indigenous peoples to spotlight the voices of communities disproportionately impacted by climate change. While the local organizers of subsequent United Nations Climate Change Conferences have denied our requests for a Climate Justice Pavilion, we are optimistic that we will be able to co-host it again at COP31 in Turkey.

## AFFILIATIONS & COALITIONS



### Environmental Justice Leadership Forum

WE ACT facilitates the Environmental Justice Leadership Forum, a national coalition of 40 environmental justice organizations across 23 states working together to advance climate justice and impact policy to ensure the health and well-being of communities of color and low-income throughout the U.S.

### JustGreen Partnership

We are co-leaders of this statewide coalition with our long-time allies, Albany-based Clean +

Healthy. Together we have passed significant legislation over the years, with an emphasis on reducing exposure to toxic chemicals in our communities.

### Clean Air for the Long Haul

We lead Clean Air for the Long Haul, a national cohort of environmental justice organizations that works to raise awareness of outdoor air pollution via its Dare to Breathe campaign as well as demanding stronger federal air pollution regulations in both the power and transportation sectors along with their enforcement.

## Equitable and Just National Climate Platform

We are among the co-authors and inaugural signatories of the Equitable and Just National Climate Platform, which was developed by environmental justice and national environmental group advocates who participate in the Climate Forum. The Climate Forum was launched in October 2018 by the Center for Earth, Energy and Democracy, the Center for American Progress, and the Natural Resources Defense Council, with support from the Midwest Environmental Justice Network and the New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance.

The forum aims to achieve the following goals:

- Support progress toward building trust and collaboration between environmental justice and national environmental group leaders;
- Develop national climate policy ideas that environmental justice and national groups can jointly support; and
- Identify pathways for more inclusive national climate policy development that will support environmental justice and national group advocates working together to advance shared policy goals and ideas.

## WE ACT 4 Change

Formed in 2020, WE ACT 4 Change Inc. is a political organization affiliated with WE ACT for Environmental Justice. As a 501(c)(4) nonprofit registered in New York State, WE ACT 4 Change can take direct political action. The goal of WE ACT 4 Change is to build and leverage political power in our fight to achieve environmental and climate justice for communities in Northern Manhattan and beyond. WE ACT 4 Change engages in voter and civic engagement activities as well as supports allies seeking office. WE ACT 4 Change also lobbies to ensure our voice is heard for policies and programs as well as to hold elected officials accountable.

## WE ACT to Vote

WE ACT to Vote is an Independent Expenditure Committee that builds and leverages political power in our fight to achieve environmental and climate justice for communities in Northern Manhattan. Its mission is to seek a more sustainable future for our community by connecting the fight for environmental justice with civic participation. Community voices are critical in shaping policies to address inequities by creating change through voting, running for office, and lobbying to ensure our voices are heard and to achieve a more just, equitable, and healthier environment in Northern Manhattan.



## LEADERSHIP

Chair the New York City  
Environmental Justice Advisory Board

Serve on the Local Law 97 Advisory Committee

Serve on the New York State Climate Leadership  
& Community Protection Act Advisory Committee

Co-chaired the White House  
Environmental Justice Advisory Council

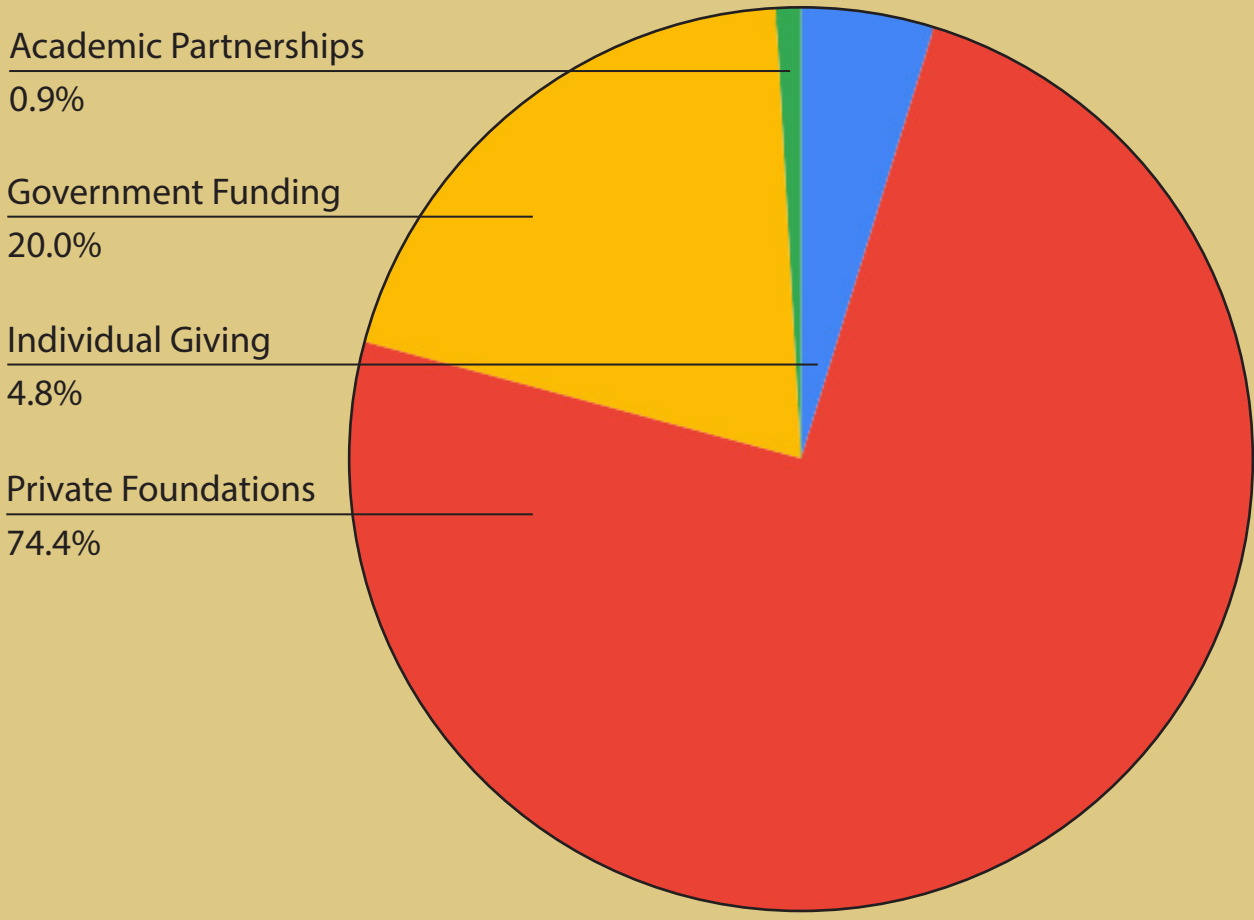
Serve on the National Black Environmental  
Justice Network Executive Committee

Co-author and Inaugural Signatory of an  
Equitable & Just National Climate Platform



## 2024 FINANCIALS

Individual Giving & Events.....	\$478,395
Private Foundations.....	\$7,459,805
Government Funding.....	\$2,001,382
Academic Partnerships.....	\$89,543
	\$10,029,125



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# GET INVOLVED

## Become a Member

Become a member and join hundreds of Northern Manhattan residents, fellow New Yorkers, and people around the country who are taking action to improve the environment and health of our community. It only costs \$25 per year, however you can pay what you can afford. We have a monthly Membership Meeting on the second Saturday of the month, focusing on various topics of interest. And we have working groups that also meet monthly to focus on specific issues like the climate crisis, reducing exposure to toxics, and improving NYCHA, the New York City Housing Authority. Of course, you don't have to

be a member to participate in any of our meetings, events, or working groups, but it's a great way to show your support and commitment.

## Donate to Support Our Work

With massive cuts in federal funding, we need your financial support more than ever. Please donate what you can to support the work we do!

## Stay Informed

We encourage you to subscribe to our weekly email newsletter, follow us on social media, listen to our bimonthly podcast, and follow our YouTube channel.



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