



Environmental Justice Task Force Newsletter December 2018

UU Seventh Principle: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part. Environmental Justice (EJ): Addressing disproportionate and adverse human health or environmental effects in communities of low-income residents or persons of color.

UU CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITY

MORRISTOWN UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP:

60 signatures (inputted online) were solicited for a petition for the Green Amendment, at the Morristown Unitarian Fellowship. A description and link were also included in the newsletter, and it was shared with their state level legislative ministry for distribution among other UU congregations. The petition is on the Highlands Coalition website:

<https://app.robly.com/archive?id=5460017587b6c1c85fcfd6b549da5034>



EJTF ACTIVITIES

- EJTF members participated (in freezing cold!) in the “**Empower NJ: No Fossil Fuels**” campaign kickoff, along with over 100 grassroots leaders representing 57 organizations and dozens of front-line communities. They stood united at the state capital on December 5, 2018, to call on Governor Murphy to enact an immediate moratorium on all fossil fuel development.



In the group at the left: Amy Goldsmith, (representing Clean Water Action), and EJTF's Nadine Sapirman, Louis Sapirman, Peggy Middaugh, Nancy Griffeth, and Clara Haignere



Louis and Nadine Sapirman



- The “**Empower NJ: No Fossil Fuels**” coalition campaign was launched on the same day world leaders gathered at the 24th annual UN climate conference to issue a stark warning that nations have a decade to cut their emissions in half by 2030 to prevent the worst consequences of climate change. Speakers stated that this warning will undoubtedly fall on deaf ears with the Trump administration, which is why Governor Murphy is being urged to live up to his climate commitments and lead a coordinated state-level effort to rapidly reduce green house gas emissions, starting with an immediate moratorium on all fossil fuel development.

Media coverage and social media content from the Coalition:

- Grassroots leader and movement documentarian Brian Lee's short video summary of the launch: <http://bit.ly/2E4zWzs>
- Full Facebook live coverage of the launch: <http://bit.ly/MoratoriumLive>
- Photo Album from December 5, 2018: <http://bit.ly/MoratoriumPhotoAlbum>
- NJ Spotlight coverage: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/18/12/05/enviros-turn-up-heat-on-governor-to-stop-fossil-fuel-developments-in-nj/>
- InsiderNJ: <https://www.insidernj.com/press-release/50-groups-call-murphy-stop-fossil-fuel-project/>

Please call Governor Murphy @ 1-866-586-4069 and urge him to be a climate leader by enacting an immediate moratorium on all fossil fuel projects in New Jersey.

- Participated in “ambush” of legislators’ meeting on proposed redistricting (aka “gerrymandering”) amendment bill (**SCR152 and ACR205**)!



EJTF representatives, along with others from UUFaithAction NJ, Working Families Party, League of Women Voters, and NJ7 Citizens for Change, staked out meetings held by Democratic legislators on December 12, 2018, in advance of the legislative hearings to be held the next day (see page 3). The “ambush” was organized primarily by Analilia Mejia of the Working Families Party.

- NJ legislative leaders--primarily Democrats--supported an amendment to the NJ constitution (**SCR152 and ACR205**) that was a purely political proposal to increase the ability of politicians to choose their voters. The usual term for it is "gerrymandering." It would also have embedded the two-party system into the state's constitution, a blatant attempt to weaken third parties like the Green and Libertarian parties. Every group that testified on the proposed amendment opposed it. Voting on the bill was scheduled for December 17, 2018, but **thanks to all the opposition, the Senate President Sweeney and Assembly Speaker Coughlin pulled the resolutions proposing the amendment on December 15!!** Earlier that day, Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg said in an interview on NPR that "There's something in this bill to affront almost everybody."
- This amendment would have flown directly in the face of UU's 5th Principle: "*The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.*" The amendment not only gave the sitting Senate president, House speaker, and minority leaders the power to appoint eight members to the redistricting commission, it also required that four of those appointees must be sitting legislators. This would clearly have empowered elected officials to have an oversized influence on who votes in their own or their own party's races.
- We will be closely watching for any replacement bills to this proposed redistricting amendment.

Descriptions of the proposed amendment and response to it:

- <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/18/12/12/op-ed-constitutional-amendment-to-alter-redistricting-rules-a-setback-for-nj/>
- <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/18/12/11/opposition-lines-up-as-nj-dems-keep-vexed-redistricting-measure-moving/>
- <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/18/12/13/trenton-hears-a-chorus-of-critics-for-the-democrats-redistricting-plan/>
- <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/18/12/13/no-backing-down-democrats-make-full-throated-defense-of-redistricting-measure/>



We also testified, along with 140 people from at least 100 different groups, at legislative hearings on the proposed redistricting amendment bill, on December 13, 2018. The League of Women Voters spearheaded the effort.

- Attended **Jersey Water Works Conference** on December 7, 2018. Covered were: 1) the role of the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), whose current priorities are as follows: climate change; protecting water; and, protecting the health of New Jersey communities, with particular focus on EJ communities; 2) the "water message paradox" – "The water is safe to drink... Everything is falling apart we need 1 million dollars;" and, 3) the case for water affordability, focusing on the fact that drinking water is an EJ issue, recognizing the importance of the infrastructure (Trump has signed a water infrastructure bill), and that we are seeing a startling return to piping sewage directly to the environment. Key questions are: "How much **should** a poor household be expected to pay for essential services? What sacrifices should be expected?"

SUMMARY OF EJTF KEY ISSUES FOR 2018:

1) Select and support a Renewable Energy Portfolio standard

- EJTF position paper: <https://uufaihtaction.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/03/PositionOn100by2035.pdf>.
- Discussion of the bill Gov. Murphy signed into law (Bill 3723): <http://www.njspotlight.com/stories/18/05/23/murphy-signing-radically-altern-j-s-energy-policies-protects-nuclear/>. [Not totally what we'd supported, but it is definitely a step in the right direction.]

2) Address the problem of lead in NJ water

- EJTF position paper: <https://uufaihtaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Position-Paper-Lead-in-Drinking-Water.pages.pdf>

3) Promote low-income Community Solar in NJ

- EJTF participated in Stakeholder meetings to create NJ's new program, reviewed and commented on the proposed rule that was issued, testified at the hearing for the draft rule, and commented on the draft rule.
- In the future, EJTF plans to follow progress on the Community Solar Pilot to emphasize both jobs and lowering bills. Utility scale solar is cheapest for rate payers; developers find Low- and Moderate-Income (LMI) subscribers most expensive to sign up; and finance groups consider projects including LMI subscribers most risky. So providing community solar for LMI households is not necessarily a big benefit for them. Jobs provided should be local if possible, or at least be in New Jersey.

EJTF KEY ISSUES FOR 2019:

1) Reducing Green House Gas (GHG) emissions from transportation

- Participated in joint legislative hearing on S2252, a comprehensive bill that establishes goals, initiatives, and programs to encourage and support use of plug-in electric vehicles. <https://legiscan.com/NJ/bill/S2252/2018>

2) Fighting against fossil fuel infrastructure –

- Three members of EJTF attended a strategy meeting for getting Governor Murphy to put a moratorium on building more fossil fuel infrastructure in NJ.
- UU FaithAction NJ also signed off on a joint letter to Governor Murphy, stating “it is high time to stop the dirty and dangerous expansion of oil and gas pipelines and other unnecessary fossil fuel developments in New Jersey. New Jersey needs a moratorium on new fossil fuel development.”
- EJTF members participated in the “Empower NJ: No Fossil Fuels” coalition campaign kickoff on December 7, 2018 (see pages 1 and 2).

LINKS RELATED TO EJTF ISSUES

CLEAN VEHICLES

- **NJ efforts to roll out zero-emission vehicles taking back seat to other initiatives?** - Advocates argue that electrifying transportation sector would save money for drivers and other consumers, but Rate Counsel wants to put on the brakes, citing steep subsidies: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/18/12/10/nj-efforts-to-roll-out-zero-emission-vehicles-taking-back-seat-to-other-initiatives/#>
- **Op-Ed: it's time to rethink how we move people and goods around NJ** - A clean transportation system would have benefits for the state's public health and economy. It would also create investment opportunities: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/18/12/02/op-ed-its-time-to-rethink-how-we-move-people-and-goods-around-the-state/>
- **NJ environmentalists support EPA plan to cut big truck pollution** - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has announced plans to decrease the amount of allowable nitrogen oxide pollution emissions that come from the engines of diesel and heavy-duty truck engines. However, they haven't indicated what the new allowable level will be. Doug O'Malley, the director of Environment New Jersey, is expressing cautious optimism about the plan: <http://nj1015.com/nj-environmentalists-support-epa-plan-to-cut-big-truck-pollution/>



FOSSIL FUEL INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES

- **104,805 signed petitions submitted to the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC)** - Collected by 15 organizations representing members in all four states that are part of the Delaware River Watershed, the petitions ask the Governors of NY, NJ, PA and DE to vote for a complete and permanent ban on fracking and its activities: <http://www.insidernj.com/press-release/100000-petitions-demanding-full-fracking-ban-delivered/>
- **Judge grants first eminent domain case to PennEast in PA** - Company says ruling will allow it to complete surveys. New Jersey landowners awaited ruling from different judge (see below): <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/18/12/10/judge-grants-first-eminent-domain-case-to-penneast-in-pennsylvania/>
- **Judge grants eminent domain in PennEast case in NJ** - A federal court judge handed PennEast a major victory in its proposal to build a natural gas pipeline through western Hunterdon County. U.S. District Judge Brian A. Martinotti ruled that PennEast can have access to properties on the pipeline route to perform surveys in preparation for the acquisition of the land through eminent domain: <https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/news/local/hunterdon-county/2018/12/14/penneast-natural-gas-pipeline/2313649002/>

LEAD IN DRINKING WATER (and other drinking water issues)

- **New chemical substitutes threaten to undermine NJ's cutting-edge rules on PFAS** - Manufacturers have responded to increasing regulation by introducing chemical alternatives that have not been fully vetted, scientists tell NJ Spotlight roundtable: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/18/12/09/new-chemical-substitutes-threaten-to-undermine-njs-cutting-edge-rules-on-pfas/>
- **Newark said its water was safe, but email reveals it was warned of problems months ago** - <https://www.nj.com/essex/2018/12/newark-was-warned-about-lead-water-problems-months-before-it-told-residents.html>

RENEWABLE RESOURCES

- UUFaithActionNJ Action item - **Help support youth fighting for action on climate change** - Representative-elect Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) has introduced a bill, supported by the youth-led Sunrise Movement (<https://www.sunrisemovement.org>), that would create a new select committee charged with writing a plan that would transition the country to 100 percent renewable energy for electricity and guarantee jobs for unemployed people, among other tasks: <https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/419117-dems-rally-for-green-new-deal>
- **Microgrids: How effective in combating storm outages?** - A New Jersey Assembly panel passed legislation prompting a study of microgrids and electric generators to reduce the duration of power outages in the state: <http://enviropoliticsblog.blogspot.com/2018/12/microgrids-how-effective-in-combating.html>
- **'Once-in-a-generation' chance to make NJ capital of offshore wind?** - If someone is going to be the capital of offshore wind, we sure want it to be New Jersey," said Tim Sullivan, CEO of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/18/11/29/once-in-a-generation-chance-to-make-new-jersey-capital-of-offshore-wind/>



CLIMATE CHANGE

- **6 things that will drastically change our lives in NJ if we do nothing about the climate crisis** - This article presents some of the recent National Climate Assessment's findings about our region: <https://www.nj.com/expo/opinion/erry-2018/12/efd0c4f18f4358/6-things-to-consider-to-solve.html>
- **NJ towns experiencing more frequent flood events as climate gets wetter:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYYejZch8sw&feature=youtu.be>

- **Federal report on climate change has grim warnings for New Jersey** - Heat waves, coastal flooding, warmer oceans, and rising sea levels threaten the Northeast region's environmental and economic systems, jeopardizing the health and safety of its residents, according to the latest climate report by the federal government: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/18/11/25/federal-report-on-climate-change-has-grim-warnings-for-new-jersey/>
- **Smith aims to get state on faster track to reducing greenhouse gas emissions** - State lawmaker seeks to put the squeeze on Murphy administration to deliver on ambitious goal of lowering carbon pollution: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/18/11/27/smith-aims-to-get-state-on-faster-track-to-reduction-in-greenhouse-gas-emissions/>
- **Lawmakers consider bill that would clamp down on short-term pollutants like methane** - could charge state DEP to restrict CO₂ pollution, most of which stems from transportation sector: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/18/12/03/take-a-deep-breath-is-new-jersey-poised-to-cut-back-on-co2-pollution/>
- **NJ not on target to reach greenhouse gas goal by 2050** - Report says state lacks coherent, comprehensive strategy to significantly reduce carbon footprint by midcentury: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/17/09/21/new-jersey-not-on-target-to-reach-greenhouse-gas-goal-by-2050/>

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

- **Dirty companies have abused N.J.'s low-income communities for decades. The state wants justice.** - State officials announced new action aimed at getting justice for low-income and minority communities that have been plagued by dangerously polluted environments: <https://www.nj.com/news/2018/12/dirty-companies-have-abused-njs-low-income-communities-for-decades-the-state-wants-justice.html>

“GREEN AMENDMENT” – Sponsored in the Assembly by UU Nancy Pinkin

The “Green Amendment” bill (Senate Concurrent Resolution 134), for a proposed amendment to the NJ Constitution to grant every person the right to a clean and healthy environment, passed the NJ Senate Environment and Energy Committee by a bipartisan supermajority. It was sent to the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee 10/15/2018. EJTF supported a letter-writing campaign on its behalf over a year ago.

- Document supporting the bill and summarizing testimony at the hearing, prior to the Senate Environment Committee passing it by a bipartisan supermajority:

<http://www.delawareriverkeeper.org/sites/default/files/PR%20NJ%20SCR134%2010.15.18.pdf>



OTHER

- **Lawmakers tap \$160m in pollution damages to restore habitats** - Money from ExxonMobil case would be part of allotment for several restoration projects, but environmentalists concerned that funds are not properly targeted: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/18/11/26/lawmakers-earmark-160m-in-pollution-settlements-to-restore-habitat-clean-up-water/>

- **Trump administration takes a major step toward Atlantic drilling with key approval of seismic testing** - The Trump administration approved key authorizations for seismic testing in the Atlantic, in a move seen as a major step forward for offshore drilling and in what environmentalists say is a threat to endangered species and other wildlife:
<https://www.nj.com/news/2018/11/trump-administration-takes-a-major-step-toward-atlantic-drilling-with-key-approval-of-seismic-testing.html>
- **These 17 N.J. towns have taken action against plastic bags. Has yours?** - State lawmakers drew up a bill that would ban plastic straws, single-use plastic shopping bags and polystyrene food containers (think Styrofoam) across NJ. That proposed ban cleared its first hurdle in late September when it was passed out of the Senate environment committee. Since then, the bill has been sitting in the Senate budget committee: <https://www.nj.com/expo/news/erry-2018/11/30a05968531626/these-17-nj-towns-have-taken-a.html>
- **Warnings that Trump change to Clean Water Act would be bad for NJ rivers** - The Trump administration proposed changes to a controversial component of the Clean Water Act, a proposal denounced by New Jersey's top environmental official as likely to increase flooding and threaten water quality in the state: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/18/12/11/warnings-that-trump-change-to-clean-water-act-would-be-bad-for-nj-rivers/>

NEW JERSEY ENVIRONMENT-RELATED BILLS PASSED 1/1/2018 – 12/14/2018

for bill text: go to Legiscan.com/NJ and search by bill number.

NJ A4120 (Passed 8/24/2018) - Authorizes special assessments and bond issuance to **replace lead-contaminated water service lines**.

NJ S1217 (Passed 5/30/2018) - Requires BPU consideration and approval of amended application for qualified **wind energy project offshore** in certain NJ territorial waters

NJ A3723 (Passed 5/23/2018) - Establishes and modifies **clean energy and energy efficiency programs**; modifies State's **solar renewable energy portfolio standards**, adds **Community Solar**.

NJ S2313 (Passed 5/23/2018) - Establishes **zero emission certificate program for nuclear power plants**.

NJ A839 (Passed 4/20/2018) - **Prohibits offshore oil and gas exploration, development, and production** in State waters, and issuance of DEP permits and approvals for activities associated with offshore oil and gas activities

NJ SR29 (Passed 2/26/2018) - **Opposes expansion of oil and natural gas drilling on Outer Continental Shelf**.

NJ S598 (Passed 2/21/2018) - Requires NJ to join U.S. Climate Alliance to uphold **Paris Climate Accord**.

UUFaithAction NJ - Environmental Justice Task Force - <https://uufaithaction.org/environment/>
Chair - Nancy Griffeth; Vice Chair - Ray Nichols

Visit our website for Environmental links and resources / sign up for email alerts / join the EJTF