

# Environmental justice must be part of climate plan

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As a coalition of community organizations working in low-income communities of color most impacted by pollution, we have been proud to support California's ambitious goals on climate change.

But the state's leadership depends on demonstrating in words and actions that our climate policies protect and benefit our most vulnerable communities. This is a moral imperative, a legal mandate and a political necessity.

Last week, the California Air Resources Board approved a roadmap to achieving the 2030 greenhouse gas reduction targets, but unfortunately it does not say how it will avoid disproportionate impacts in low-income and minority communities.

We've already seen preliminary data showing that under cap and trade, even though California is on track to reach 2020 targets, emissions in some industries have actually increased. These polluters are disproportionately located near vulnerable communities, so they are hit first and hardest.

The air resources board's plan does not clearly lay out how it will reduce emissions in these communities, or how the reauthorized cap-and-trade program will achieve most of the 2030 greenhouse gas reductions. Further, the plan undermines one of the most important environmental justice policies, Assembly Bill 197, which requires the board to prioritize emission reductions. That is not only the most effective way to cut greenhouse gases, it also reduces air pollution in poor and minority communities.

The board is relying on cap and trade to drive just under half the total emission reductions, much more than previously anticipated. However, we

still do not have any models to show how the program will be able to achieve that or what design changes will be needed. There is also the looming issue of oversupply of pollution credits, most recently outlined by the Legislative Analyst's Office.

The danger is that we could end up with a system that meets California's climate goals on paper, while on the ground plants continue to spew toxic greenhouse gases.

Finally, the plan is completely silent on seriously tackling the need to fully transition off fossil fuels. California is one of the nation's largest oil and gas producers, and until we start shifting this balance we will undermine our climate goals and continue polluting nearby communities.

So what can the board do to better integrate environmental justice and put us on a better track to meet our 2030 targets?

For a start, the board must follow the intent of AB 197 and propose a set of prioritized emission reductions. It needs to publicly provide data and analysis about greenhouse gas and air pollutant trends in real time. It must also start talking to communities about the impacts of oil extraction and production on their health and quality of life.

These are just a few of the many steps to integrate environmental justice into meeting our 2030 targets. By doing so, we can protect vulnerable communities and create climate policies that will lead the world.

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