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70+ Organizations Oppose CARB Chair Mary Nichols for EPA Nichols' signature programs created 'environmental sacrifice zones'

WASHINGTON - Over 70 organizations, led by California-based environmental justice groups, sent a letter to President-Elect Biden on Tuesday urging him to reject Mary Nichols as a prospective nominee to head the Environmental Protection Agency. Nichols has served as the Chair of the California Air Resources Board (CARB) since 2007.

During the campaign, the Biden-Harris campaign made environmental justice a core part of their climate plan, recognizing that ["environmental policy decisions of the past have failed communities of color."](#) With Ms. Nichols identified as a candidate for EPA Administrator, California environmental justice communities are now holding the President and Vice-President to their word, asserting that Nichols is incompatible with their campaign promise to ensure that communities burdened by pollution would benefit from a transition to clean energy.

During her tenure as CARB Chair, Nichols has been known for pushing market-based approaches to the climate crisis at the expense of the health and well-being of California's communities of color, who suffer from some of the deadliest air in the country. The California groups' letter outlines examples of how Nichols has disregarded environmental justice during her tenure.

"As CARB Chair for well over ten years, Mary Nichols had a unique opportunity and responsibility to address generations of environmental injustice in California, as she was urged by community members time and time again. Regrettably, over the years she instead dismissed petitions of frontline communities aimed at both improving their environmental health and preventing further harms from pollution and the climate crisis," said Gladys Limón, Executive Director of the California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA). "As demands for racial justice heighten, COVID-19 races through historically redlined neighborhoods, and big polluters continue to fuel the climate crisis, we need an EPA leader who will partner with frontline communities to advance truly equitable solutions that center the well-being of people, not industries."

Nichols' signature cap-and-trade program created a market for big polluters to buy and sell pollution allowances at just \$15 per ton. The program is [failing to meet its own emissions reduction targets](#) and has [increased pollution from the oil and gas industry](#).

"Mary Nichols' cap-and-trade program turned working class communities of color into [environmental sacrifice zones](#)," said Miya Yoshitani, Executive Director of Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN). "Nichols' approach left gaping loopholes for industrial polluters to continue to pollute for profit, and increased pollution burdens on the communities living alongside refineries, oil and gas wells, and dirty power plants. President Biden must learn from

California's failures and appoint an EPA leader who will work with us to lead a just transition away from an economy based on profit and pollution and toward an economy where all of us can thrive."

As the Biden transition team considers candidates for the EPA Administrator position, environmental justice groups are calling on the Biden team to engage frontline communities in making decisions that will have direct impacts on their lives.

"We need to see that President Biden's commitment to environmental justice goes beyond campaign promises," said Mari Rose Taruc, who was one of several signatories on the letter who served on the CARB's Environmental Justice Advisory Committee. "In the coming days and throughout the next four years, the Biden administration will need to deeply engage with and prioritize the wellbeing of working class, Black, Indigenous and communities of color in order to address environmental racism. That starts with listening to the communities most harmed by the fossil fuel industry and appointing leaders who will put the interests of environmental justice ahead of fossil fuel executives."

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