



# On Earth Day, Duckworth, Booker & Carper Announce Creation of Environmental Justice Caucus

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— On Earth Day, U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Tom Carper (D-DE) announced the creation of the Senate’s first-ever Environmental Justice Caucus to call Congress’ attention to the many environmental justice issues affecting our nation. The caucus will raise awareness of the many environmental and pollution issues that have created public health challenges, which disproportionately impact low income communities and communities of color. The caucus will help those communities advocate for themselves with the federal government by providing expertise and assistance, generate legislation and organize hearings and events. It will also coordinate with the House Environmental Justice Task Force, which consists of members from the Congressional Black Caucus, Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and the Asian Pacific American Caucus.

**“Every American has the right to breathe safe air, drink clean water and live on uncontaminated land regardless of their zip code, the size of their wallet and the color of their skin. However, too often that is not the case, especially for low income communities and people of color,”** said Senator Duckworth. **“That’s why I’m proud to start the Senate’s first Environmental Justice Caucus to raise awareness of the fact that communities of color face public health challenges at alarming rates while too many in power look the other way. Together, we will be strong advocates for every person’s right to a safe, healthy and livable environment.”**

**“We cannot achieve economic justice or social justice in this country without also addressing environmental justice,”** said Senator Booker. **“The fact that communities of color, low income communities, and indigenous communities across the country disproportionately face environmental hazards and harmful pollutants on a daily**

basis has been ignored for far too long. Clean air and clean water shouldn't be luxuries for the privileged, and the Environmental Justice Caucus is an important step toward raising awareness and taking action to address this injustice."

**"Our Constitution guarantees every American the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness — but none of those things are possible without clean air to breathe and clean water to drink. The sad truth is that the meaningful progress we've made over decades to clean our air and water has not been distributed equally,"** said Senator Carper. **"A disproportionate number of lower-income, minority and indigenous communities across the country are in the path of pollution that degrades quality of life and puts human health at risk. Far too often, the concerns of these communities is addressed at a woefully inadequate pace, especially in comparison to more affluent communities with ample resources. That should not be the case. I'm excited to co-found this caucus and confront this public health challenge, and I want to thank my EPW colleagues Senators Duckworth and Booker for their dedicated leadership."**

Carper is the Ranking Member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Duckworth is the Ranking Member of the Senate Fisheries, Water and Wildlife Subcommittee and Booker is the Ranking Member of the Senate Superfund, Waste Management and Regulatory Oversight Subcommittee.

**"Every American is entitled to clean air, pure water, and access to a healthy natural environment. Unfortunately, for far too long, these environmental rights have been inaccessible for rural and low-income communities and communities of color,"**said House Environmental Justice Task Force Co-Founder Congressman A. Donald McEachin. **"That is why, last Congress, I co-founded the United for Climate and Environmental Justice task force with Congresswomen Jayapal and Barragán to shed greater light on these environmental injustices. I am thrilled that the task force is now a bicameral initiative. Under the leadership of Senators Duckworth, Booker, and Carper, we will pursue climate and environmental justice together, and take action to mitigate the effects of climate change on our most vulnerable."**

Environmental justice activism has deep roots in the state of Illinois. Hazel Johnson, an activist from the Southside of Chicago, is often considered 'the mother of the environmental justice movement.' Illinois unfortunately also has a number of environmental justice challenges. Black kids on the South and West Sides of Chicago are [eight times more likely](#) to die from asthma than white children and asthma rates among African American adults in Chicago are [nearly 75% higher](#) than among white adults. Many of the worst pollution issues in the city, such as the high rates of manganese emissions on the Southeast Side, disproportionately impact communities of color — and

communities of color in cities like Cairo have been disproportionately at risk of lead poisoning.