



Senator Duckworth to Spotlight Environmental Justice with State of the Union Guest

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Today, U.S. Senator and co-founder of the Senate's [Environmental Justice Caucus](#) Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), announced that she will bring Illinois-based environmental justice advocate Celeste Flores as her guest to State of the Union address tomorrow. Celeste is the Lake County Outreach Director for Faith in Place, an Illinois-based educational and advocacy organization that helps diverse religious and faith communities implement environmental programs, and Co-Chair of Clean Power Lake County, a community-driven coalition committed to local action to secure environmental, economic and racial justice.

“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, that’s often not the case for low income communities and people of color,” said Duckworth. **“I’m so pleased to bring Celeste—a tireless advocate for environmental justice—as my guest to the State of the Union so together, we can shine a light on these issues and raise awareness of the fact that these communities face public health challenges at alarming rates while too many in power look the other way.”**

Duckworth is a member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works and the Senate Democrats' Special Committee on the Climate Crisis. In April 2019, Duckworth [co-founded the Senate's first-ever Environmental Justice Caucus](#) to 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 seeks to help those communities advocate for themselves with the federal government by providing expertise and assistance, generate legislation and organize hearings and events. Duckworth spoke at the [Faith in Place Green Team Summit in September](#), where Celeste introduced her, and hosted a [roundtable in Waukegan](#) to discuss environmental justice issues.

“Growing up in Waukegan, a low-income and working-class area, and as a child of immigrant parents in a predominantly Latinx and African American community, I’ve seen firsthand how Environmental Justice communities in Lake County carry the burden of polluting industries and are forced to deal with the consequences of environmental injustice for generations,” said Flores. **“The time to act is now and by joining together with elected officials like Senator Duckworth, who has been a staunch advocate for environmental justice, we can lift up the voices of those disproportionately affected and achieve our shared vision for social change that is led by those most directly impacted.”**

Celeste Flores is the daughter of immigrant parents, she was born and raised in Lake County, Illinois and has been a lifelong member of Most Blessed Trinity Parish. While a student at Bellarmine University in Kentucky, Celeste saw the devastation of Mountaintop removal and became involved in environmental justice. After graduation, she spent a year as an Americorp volunteer in Appalachia and then returned to Lake County, where she learned about local environmental justice efforts to ensure Waukegan a just transition away from the coal-fired plant on the shore of Lake Michigan. In November, [she participated in a hearing](#), chaired by Duckworth and organized by the Senate Democrats' Special Committee on the Climate Crisis, about the ways climate change uniquely impacts environmental justice communities.