



# Illinois Legislative Leaders, Advocates Reintroduce ?Clean Energy Jobs Act (CEJA)

February 9 2021 4:48 PM

SPRINGFIELD - As Illinois faces an economic and public health crisis, a racial and economic justice crisis, and a crisis of utility corruption, leaders of the Illinois General Assembly and the [Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition \(ICJC\)](#) today announced the reintroduction of the Clean Energy Jobs Act (CEJA) with a pledge to pass the comprehensive legislation in the General Assembly by May 2021.

With a new Biden administration pursuing rapid federal action on the climate crisis, a clean jobs champion serving as the new Speaker of the Illinois House, and CEJA champions taking over leadership of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus, the urgency and opportunity to pass CEJA is at an all-time high.

More than a year ago, Governor Pritzker committed to passing community-driven clean energy legislation that would create jobs and protect our planet. In his 2020 State of the State address, Gov. Pritzker said, “It’s time to put consumers and climate first. I’m not going to sign a bill written by the utility companies.”

In fact, Illinois and Oregon are the [only states in the country](#) led by Democrats that haven’t committed to 100% clean energy by 2050. CEJA changes all of that.

CEJA would hold utilities accountable and move Illinois to 100 percent clean energy by 2050, by drawing billions of dollars in renewable energy investment to Illinois, expanding money-saving efficiency programs, and promoting vehicle electrification. CEJA would spark tens of thousands of clean energy jobs without raising taxes, hiking power bills, or giving bailouts to Exelon or fossil fuel companies.

“The days of the big utility companies meeting in back rooms to shape energy policy to benefit their bottom lines are over. CEJA is a product of the most grassroots-intensive

energy policy development effort in the history of Illinois. It was put together after over 100 'Listen. Lead. Share.' community meetings were held across the state. As a result of this grassroots effort, the bill addresses head on the issues most important to communities: it tackles climate change, creates equitable jobs in every part of Illinois, and holds utilities accountable. This is what the people of Illinois want, and we're working to make it happen on behalf of all Illinois communities," said State Rep. Ann Williams, House sponsor of CEJA and chair of the House Energy & Environment Committee.

“While we are heartened by President Biden’s leadership on climate change, only the states can ensure the benefits of clean energy policy flow equitably to communities of color often left behind, support the development of rooftop solar and energy efficiency programs, hold utilities accountable, deploy electric vehicles, and support a just transition for former fossil fuel communities. CEJA is the most comprehensive energy bill that tackles all these issues, and without it, President Biden cannot achieve his ambitious climate change goals. Illinois must lead the way,” said State Sen. Cristina Castro, Senate sponsor of CEJA.

As demonstrated in the recent lame duck session, the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus is a key force for change in Springfield. Black Caucus Chairs Sen. Robert Peters and Rep. Kam Buckner, as well as Joint Caucus Chair Rep. Sonya Harper, are all strong supporters of the Clean Energy Jobs Act.

“We don’t just want electric vehicle charging stations, rooftop and community solar, and energy efficiency projects completed in Black neighborhoods and communities. We want Black workers installing them, and we want Black-owned businesses designing the projects and getting them built. Chicago should be at the forefront of moving from the Rust Belt to a Green Belt. Clean energy must become an engine of safety and stability in our communities, and CEJA is the only comprehensive energy bill that delivers on that promise,” said State Sen. Robert Peters, Senate chair of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus.

Rep. Buckner stressed that CEJA works because it includes a comprehensive plan to break down the barriers in job training and clean energy entrepreneurship that have kept Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities from sharing in the benefits of clean energy. “Our communities have borne the brunt of the health problems associated with pollution, and we have taken a huge toll in death and joblessness from COVID-19. CEJA is a key component to economic recovery and building back better. This legislation also ends the automatic rate hikes that have been particularly onerous to poor and working families in our communities,” said State Rep. Kam Buckner, House chair of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus.

Sen. Castro said one of the reasons why CEJA attracted 30 co-sponsors in the Illinois Senate last session was because the bill also addresses the needs of communities left in the lurch when coal companies cut and run, leaving joblessness, contaminated work sites, and property tax revenue deficits in their wake. CEJA helps communities disadvantaged by fossil fuel companies move forward, transitioning to new clean energy jobs and helping to prevent layoffs for teachers and first responders.

“We can’t keep letting fossil fuel companies cut and run on the local communities they polluted for years. And, we need to end bailouts for those fossil fuel companies,” added Sen. Castro.

Rep. Williams also discussed how CEJA will promote the conversion of municipal bus and car fleets to electric vehicles, and build electric vehicle charging centers in every community to begin decarbonizing the transportation sector.

“It’s critical we ensure a robust charging infrastructure so the Chicago Transit Authority and cities like Peoria and Rockford can replace pollution-emitting buses and cars with 100% clean energy electric vehicles. That’s a huge step forward for communities with high rates of asthma and other lung diseases and critical to the health of our families,” added Rep. Williams.

The legislation will be filed in the Illinois House of Representatives this week.