Booker, Grijalva, Lee, Duckworth Introduce the A. Donald McEachin Environmental Justice for All Act

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, on World Water Day, U.S. Senator Cory Booker (D-N.J.), Ranking Member Raúl M. Grijalva (D-AZ), U.S. Representative Barbara Lee (D-CA), and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) reintroduced the newly renamed A. Donald McEachin Environmental Justice for All Act at a bicameral press conference, joined by House Natural Resources Committee Vice Ranking Member Sydney Kamlager-Dove (D-CA) and a range of grassroots groups, youth advocates, and environmental justice community leaders from across the country.

Named in honor of the House bill’s original co-lead, the late Rep. A. Donald McEachin (D-Va.), the A. Donald McEachin Environmental Justice for All Act is the most comprehensive environmental justice legislation in history. The legislation incorporates extensive community feedback, including 350 written comments from members of the public and leaders in the environmental justice movement, and has support from more than 300 groups.

“In this country, environmental justice is intrinsically linked with economic and social justice,” said Senator Booker. “We have a moral obligation to ensure that everyone has access to clean air, clean water, and a healthy environment. Unfortunately, communities of color, low-income communities, and indigenous communities across our country are disproportionately exposed to toxic chemicals and harmful pollutants that result from the actions of the negligent few. That is why I am proud to join my colleagues Senator Duckworth and Congressmembers Grijalva and Lee in introducing this bill that would ensure everyone has access to the most basic human needs such as clean water and clean air, regardless of their socioeconomic status or the color of their skin.”

“The Environmental Justice For All Act would not have been possible without Rep. McEachin’s vision and tireless commitment to making sure that the communities impacted by this bill were at the table in every step of crafting it,” said Ranking Member Grijalva. “This bill belongs to him and the environmental justice communities all over this country who have been fighting for their rights to clean air, clean water, and their health for decades. The A. Donald McEachin Environmental Justice For All Act will take the concrete action we need to help make sure the same destruction that’s been perpetrated against poor communities and communities of color for decades doesn’t happen again. We’re going to build on the progress and momentum we’ve made collectively and turn this legislation into law.”

“Growing up in El Paso, Texas under the shadow of the Asarco copper smelter, I know firsthand how harmful environmental pollution can be to communities,” said Representative Lee. “But unlike when I was a child, we now have overwhelming, indisputable scientific evidence that marginalized communities in America are bearing the brunt of toxic pollution and climate change. As our late colleague and friend Congressman Donald McEachin said, access to clean air, clean water, and a healthy environment should not be a luxury. This legislation is rooted in that principle. I am proud to take up Rep. McEachin’s fight as the new co-lead of this transformative bill, and will not stop until we achieve environmental justice for all—no matter where you live, what you look like, or how much you make.”

“For far too long, we have put our most toxic, most polluting industries next door to Black and Brown neighborhoods while those in power have looked away—enough,” said Senator Duckworth. “As the co-chair and co-founder of the Senate’s first-ever Environmental Justice Caucus, I’m proud to introduce the A. Donald McEachin Environmental Justice For All Act with Senator Booker and Congressmembers Grijalva and Lee to help us uproot systemic racism, promote health equity and protect every American’s right to breathe safe air, drink clean water and live on uncontaminated land—regardless of their zip code.”

“We are facing a climate crisis that is disproportionately impacting Black and Brown communities across the country,” said Representative Kamlager-Dove. “As the Vice Ranking Member on the House Natural Resources Committee, I am proud to stand with my colleagues to secure clean air and water for future generations and address the severe and lasting impacts of environmental racism. Together, we can advance environmental justice measures that put communities first and honor the legacy of the late Representative Donald McEachin.”

“All people have the right to a healthy environment, including clean air, water, and soil; nearby, accessible nature; resilience to natural disasters; and a stable climate,” said Maite Arce, CEO of Hispanic Access Foundation. “Yet many Black, Indigenous, Latino, and other communities of color face environmental racism from disproportionate exposure to toxins, air and climate pollutants, and a lack of access to nature. This bill, created in collaboration with those most impacted by environmental racism, will lead to greater equity and justice by protecting communities of color that are burdened with the highest levels of pollution.”
Hispanic Access Foundation’s Por La Creación Faith-Based Alliance - a national group of Latino faith leaders with the mission of protecting God’s creation - welcomes this bill, because we believe that God gave us the Earth to act as stewards,” said Juan Rosas, PLC Faith Leader, Hispanic Access. “Reducing the contamination our communities and environment face is one aspect of stewarding God’s creation. All families deserve to breathe clean air, but that is not currently the case, especially in our Latino communities. It is up to us, as faith leaders and leaders of environmental justice communities, to ensure that we are creating a healthy environment for our families and our planet to thrive.”

“Tomorrow’s economy should not come at the expense of frontline and fenceline communities — and environmental victories should not be built on the backs of people struggling to recover from past policies,” said Dr. Adrienne L. Hollis, Vice President of Environmental Justice, Health, and Community Revitalization at the National Wildlife Federation. “The A. Donald McEachin Environmental Justice for All Act will help ensure that everyone can enjoy clean air, clean water, and healthy environments while progress on climate and clean energy do not come at the expense of communities of color. Congress should take up this legislation, which was developed in partnership with impacted communities themselves, and pass it into law.”

“The A. Donald McEachin Environmental Justice For All Act is an example of comprehensive and representative legislation that can be achieved when elected officials listen to key stakeholders and prioritize community input,” said Katie Hulffing, DNP, RN, CNM, FAAN, Executive Director of Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments. “Nurses recognize the benefits and wholeheartedly support legislation that helps ensure equal access to clean water, air, land, green spaces and health promoting programs. Passage of the EJ4All Act will be a step towards health equity and members of The Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments will continue to meet with their legislators to bring awareness and support for this historic and necessary legislation.”

“The Hip Hop Caucus (HHC) is pleased to see the reintroduction of the Environmental Justice for All Act, and its naming in honor of the late great Congressman A. Donald McEachin,” said Rev. Lennox Yearwood Jr., President and CEO of Hip Hop Caucus. “Congressman McEachin was actually the first guest on HHC’s award-winning podcast, The Coolest Show (Season 1, Episode 1), where he discussed the history of the environmental justice movement. Representing the 4th District of Virginia, Congressman McEachin kept the interests of his community first and wasn’t afraid to challenge those who wanted to keep vulnerable Black, Brown and Indigenous communities from moving from surviving to thriving. The Environmental Justice For All Act embodies that commitment, shining a light on the cumulative impacts of pollution on air and water for those communities, while strengthening the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and other civil rights areas to ensure communities can fight back against polluters.”

“Let’s change Climate Change to what this really is,” said Rudy Arredondo, President, CEO, and Founder of the Latino Farmers & Ranchers International, Inc. “We are no longer on a ‘climate change’ phase, we are in a Climate Crisis! Farmworkers, farmers and ranchers are the indisputable ‘Stewards of the Land.’ From the planting of seeds, cultivation, harvesting and deliverance to our table. They are the direct link to humanity. If farmers and ranchers do not provide us with food, humanity dies.

“Farmworkers, farmers and ranchers are the lands ‘First Responders’ of any climactic event 24/7 that occurs at any given time in order to protect their farms and ranches to their crop and/or stock from damage? Farmworkers, farmers and ranchers are also essential in the remediation of whatever damage a climatic catastrophe causes on the ground.

“Therefore, it is of utmost importance that when we are talking about ‘Environmental Justice,’ we should give first priority to farmworkers, farmers and ranchers that ensure that resources are adequate and sufficient and immediately available for them to do the do the remediation essential in making their farms and ranches resilient so that they can keep us fed.”

The legislation is cosponsored by: U.S. Senators Ed Markey (D-MA), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Peter Welch (D-VT), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Tina Smith (D-MN), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), and Alex Padilla (D-CA); U.S. Representatives Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Adriano Espaillat (D-N.Y.), Nanette Diaz Barragán (D-CA), Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), Grace Meng (D-N.Y.), Pramila Jayapal (D-WA), Ro Khanna (D-CA), Diana DeGette (D-CO), Joyce Beatty (D-OH), Bobby Scott (D-VA), Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.), Veronica Escobar (D-TX), Kathy Castor (D-FL), Gerry Connolly (D-VA), Julia Brownley (D-CA), Melanie Stansbury (D-N.M.), Grace Napolitano (D-CA), Jared Huffman (D-CA), Joe Neguse (D-CO), Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y), Nydia Velázquez (D-N.Y), Katie Porter (D-CA), Jimmy Gomez (D-CA), Jamaal Bowman (D-N.Y.), Jill Tokuda (D-HI), Sydney Kamlager-Dove (D-CA), Greg Casar (D-TX), James P. McGovern (D-MA), Kweisi Mfume (D-MD), Robin Kelly (D-IL), Betty McCollum (D-MN), Jennifer McClellan (D-VA) and Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX).

Watch the lawmakers introduce the legislation at today’s press conference here.

The letter of support from endorsing organizations can be found here.

The full text of the bill can be found here.

The fact sheet on the bill can be found here.