

**PEOPLE'S PLAN FOR PA**  
 **CLIMATE JUSTICE**

[peoplesplanforpa.org](http://peoplesplanforpa.org)

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# »» WHAT WE WANT

## People's Plan for PA Climate Justice

For centuries, Pennsylvanians have labored, often in grueling and unsafe conditions, to build the Pennsylvania we know today. For too long, the wealthiest individuals, biggest landowners, and largest companies have benefited the most, while the workers and environment have struggled to survive. Now, Pennsylvania stands at a crossroads. Climate change, foes of democracy, racism, nativism, colonialism, and widening income inequality threaten our commonwealth, country, and world.

*The People's Plan for PA* is a platform developed by a collaboration of community partners, advocates, and workers from across the state working together to create a better, fairer future where the environment is vibrant, people hold power, and democracy is secure. For that future to become a reality, we need changes at the local, state, and federal levels. The People's Plan for PA includes a myriad of policies that will create a healthy, secure, and safe Pennsylvania now and for generations to come.



Courtesy of Pittsburghers for Public Transit

# »» WHAT WE WANT

## People's Plan for PA Climate Justice

**We Demand** Clean, Accessible, and Safe Water

**We Demand** the Right to Breathe

**We Demand** a Just, Sustainable, Democratic, and Accessible Energy System

**We Demand** Safe, Affordable, and Sustainable Shelter for ALL

**We Demand** Protection of our Land and communities through Community Stewardship

**We Demand** Fair, Safe, and Living Wage Jobs for Our Communities

**We Demand** Investment in Public Systems that Ensure Healthy and Connected Communities

**We Demand** a Participatory Democracy Accountable to People so Climate Justice and Restorative Justice is Possible



# »» INTRODUCTION

From the coal mines of the southwest to the frackland of the northeast, from the locomotive factories of the northwest to the oil refineries of the southeast, through the forests and fields, to custodial closets, hospitals, and hotels, the history of Pennsylvania is one of extraction and pollution. For centuries, the people of this commonwealth have labored, often in grueling and unsafe conditions, to build the Pennsylvania we know today. At times, that work has meant clearcutting forests, stripping the ground, polluting the air, fouling the water, and driving animals to (the brink of) extinction. The benefits of this exploitation of land and labor have been uneven. The wealthiest individuals, biggest landowners, and largest companies have benefited the most, while the workers and environment, who generated the wealth, have struggled to survive. Over the years, those in power have monopolized power in the past and stand to do so in the future.

Pennsylvania stands now at a crossroads. Climate change, foes of democracy, racism, nativism, colonialism, and widening income inequality threaten our commonwealth, country, and world. Shall we continue the centuries of extraction and anti-people policies that led us here? Or shall we work to create a better, fairer future—a future where the environment is vibrant? A future where people hold power and democracy is secure? A future where the land and labor of our commonwealth advance our common health?

This platform is a guide to that better future. The following pages highlight some key policies across different issues, all of which are connected. For that future to become a reality, we need changes at the local, state, and federal levels. These policies are steps to creating a healthy, secure, and safe Pennsylvania now and for generations to come.

# »» PROCESS

The process of developing the **People's Plan for PA Climate Justice** began with a collective review and discussion of the [Red, Black, and Green New Deal platform](#), [Peoples Orientation to a Regenerative Economy](#), [Gulf South for a Green New Deal](#), and [Platform for an Equitable and Just Greater Pittsburgh](#). These initial conversations guided the structure for this platform. In Fall 2021, network members facilitated conversations with their members about their policy priorities. In these facilitated discussions, participants shared specific concerns across multiple topic areas. We then compiled the input from the different organizations' members to draft the platform. Collectively, the network revised and updated the draft through a series of meetings to better inform and guide the work being done on a state-wide scale.



# »» HOW TO USE THIS PLATFORM

With a primary interest in elections and federal investments, the platform focuses on base building, political education, mobilization, and communications. We believe this platform has the power to amplify and advance change in Pennsylvania and lead us to a better, brighter, and more secure future. To help make that future a reality, this platform should be used to:

- Educate and build a collective understanding among our community members on policies and issues
- Spearhead a strategy in which our local communities and our commonwealth can divest from extractive industries, economies, and state violence and invest in making our communities healthy, whole, and just
- Make our issues and solutions front and center for leaders and decision-makers
- Ensure state agencies move public dollars to communities in need



# CONTRIBUTORS & SUPPORTERS

## People's Plan for PA Climate Justice

The **People's Plan for PA Climate Justice** is the result of the collaboration between community partners, advocates, and workers from across the state working towards a common goal. Led by a small network coordinating team, individual organizations engaged their members in conversations about platform content. The end result is a state-wide platform geared towards education, base building, advocacy, engagement, and empowerment.



\* People's Plan for PA Climate Justice Coordinating Team

^ Assembled and designed this document

# WATER & AIR



Article 1, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution states:

*“The people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment. Pennsylvania’s public natural resources are the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come. As trustee of these resources, the Commonwealth shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all the people.”*

Even though this amendment has been in our Constitution for over 50 years, many people throughout this state—in urban, suburban, and rural areas—still do not have access to breathable air or drinkable water. Public resources have been privatized. Large companies have siphoned out the wealth of our natural resources while the public has shouldered the costs.

We call for the policies that affect this state to uphold our environmental rights! We call for our public resources to continue to benefit all! We call for our environment to be abundant and life-giving, now and for generations to come!

## **WATER:**

- Ban the privatization of water and wastewater systems
- Require that public authorities are governed democratically (like space for community input, ability to influence who is on boards, etc.)
- Properly enforce and strengthen the Pennsylvania Lead and Copper Rule
- Enhance access to safe and affordable drinking water

# WATER & AIR (CONT.)



- Remove PFAS and other toxic minerals or chemicals from drinking water supplies and invest in the removal of lead and copper from water distribution systems
- Require polluters to monitor well water for PFAS and fracking chemicals
- Manage waste coal piles without burning them, including by using beach grass to stabilize and recover the land

## **AIR:**

- Strengthen emission standards for PM2.5
- Establish funds made up of emission violation fines & use them to invest in air filtration devices for EJ residents and schools
- Set up official air monitors throughout EJ communities
- Require continuous emissions monitoring and real-time online reporting for all regulated air pollutants for which the technology is commercially available
- Require the PA DEP to affirm the rights of counties and municipalities to adopt more protective local clean air laws
- Require the PA DEP to deny permits to polluters where cumulative impacts are determined to be excessive
- Increase penalties for violating pollution standards to the point where they're sufficient to deter polluting behavior and are not simply the cost of doing business

# ENERGY



Pennsylvania has been a center for coal, oil, and natural gas extraction. This fossil fuel extraction has helped the commonwealth grow economically but has placed a heavy burden on the biophysical environment and people who live here. Some families and communities are still paying the price for decades of extraction. In rural areas, for example, acid mine drainage threatens water supplies. In urban areas, coke oven and oil refinery air pollution still make it difficult to breathe. While Pennsylvanians are left with the negative impacts of the fossil fuel industry, many of the profits flow out of state to multinational corporations. Often, people are left powerless to clean up after other people's messes. Across the commonwealth, people face high utility bills and live in homes that are not prepared for a wetter, hotter climate.

Instead of continuing on a fossil fuel path—one that threatens our commonwealth and our world—we demand a life-giving path. We want a path that benefits our environment and everyone in it. That future is one of community-owned clean energy, where residents are trained for the work to get us there. We define clean energy to mean: conservation, efficiency, and solar, wind, and energy storage, without nuclear power or combustion-based energy sources.



*Courtesy of the Energy Justice Network*

# ENERGY (CONT.)



- End fracking, including by:
  - Enacting an immediate moratorium on new permits,
  - Ending subsidies to the fossil fuel industry, and
  - Guaranteeing a just transition for laborers and communities
- Fund community owned energy projects and programs
- Shift completely and quickly to clean energy sources
- Ensure utilities are affordable for everyone and provide accessible customer service
- Approve community solar legislation that allows communities to benefit directly from the energy that they produce and sell
- Support community owned clean energy projects and programs that directly benefit engaged communities
- Require energy producers and providers to prevent and be held accountable for the negative social and environmental impact of their activities if and when they occur
- Hold PA DEP and utility regulators accountable and transparent to the public
- End subsidies for coal, oil, gas, nuclear, and biomass and waste incineration, including in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) and the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard
- Ban proof-of-work cryptocurrency mining, which depends on large amounts of carbon-intensive and extractive energy

# HOUSING & LAND USE



Across the commonwealth, housing is still unaffordable for many residents. In cities and small towns, people have been forced to live only where they can afford to live, not where they would prefer to live. Those homes are often outside of their communities, not energy efficient, lacking easy access to food, away from public transit, and farther from jobs. At the same time, suburban and exurban growth continues, taking over what was once farmland or forest. More and more, corporate and private investors—many from outside the commonwealth buy up the land. The interests of profit, not people or the planet, drive development.

Housing should be healthy, safe, affordable, and accessible. Like access to clean air and water (above) and other quality of life issues (below), secure housing is a necessity for thriving. People and the planet should be centered in land use decisions. Residents must be included in decision-making. Land should be owned and used for our common wealth.

## **HOUSING:**

- Invest in energy efficient home ownership programs
- Make safe, clean, and affordable housing more accessible, especially in communities experiencing rapid development
- Ensure safe, affordable, healthy, and energy-efficient shelter for everyone—renters and homeowners—including by using the proposed Whole Home Repairs Fund
- Weatherize homes and schools and make them energy efficient
- Remove lead paint, pipes, and soils from homes and schools
- Connect homes and schools with clean energy infrastructure, prioritizing homes and schools in EJ communities
- Use job training, small business, and coop development programs for weatherization, retrofitting, and energy-efficiency work

# HOUSING & LAND USE (CONT.)

- Promote cooperatively-owned housing with long term benefits
- Prevent homelessness and eviction, including by providing free legal aid
- Require people-and-community-centered development that prevents displacement and includes residents' right to return, inclusionary zoning, and land trusts
- Ensure all (public and private) utility companies provide affordable and clean water and energy to their residents

## **LAND USE:**

- Control vacant municipally owned land through land banks
- End sheriff sales
- Enforce land use and zoning codes already in place
- Prioritize existing manufacturing facilities over building new facilities
- Close correctional facilities on toxic waste dumps
- Improve waste management practices and transition to a zero-waste system
- Transform former extraction sites and current and former prisons into sites that support a regenerative economy that benefits their communities
- Make ownership of vacant land more accessible to local residents and growers
- Ensure vacant land is maintained through local contracts, trade programs, and incentivized community volunteer groups

# LABOR



From farmers to miners to teachers to nurses, workers have built this commonwealth. Despite the growth of unions and the growth of the middle class, corporate and elite power is chipping away at worker rights and protections. Many workers have never had the opportunity to join unions, and some have not been welcomed, even when they could. New automated technologies seek to replace laborers. New practices, like using independent contractors, serve to weaken workers' security and power. These new technologies and practices both serve to increase corporate profits.

As we shift away from fossil fuels, we need a just transition for all workers. Shifting to clean energy is an opportunity for new and existing workers across the commonwealth. We can structure our economy so that workers own their labor and benefit from it. We can reconfigure our economy around securing healthy lives for all residents. We can provide training and jobs while creating the future we want. This is how we build Pennsylvania's common wealth and common health.

## **JOB TRAINING:**

- Include improving education for just transition, including by strengthening and expanding vocational programs
- Ensure that just transition job training programs lead to union jobs or jobs that pay prevailing wages for non-union jobs, including in housing and school retrofitting and weatherization
- Make green job opportunities clear, transparent, and accessible
- Ensure that green jobs are so appealing that workers will want to shift from fossil fuels to green jobs
- Educate workers about cooperative ownership
- Prioritize community workforce for local development and maintenance

# LABOR (CONT.)



## WORKERS' RIGHTS:

- Fund pensions and other retirement benefits to allow workers in carbon-intensive jobs to retire
- Raise the minimum wage to a family-sustaining living wage that keeps pace with inflation and the cost of living
- Demand profit sharing provisions in labor contracts
- Ensure all govt-funded programs and subsidies to private businesses have strict requirements protecting workers rights, including:
  - Maintaining employer neutrality
  - Ensuring card check neutrality
  - Not replacing strikers
  - Strengthening labor laws to include protections for cash and undocumented workers and including protections against wage theft and retaliation
  - Enforcing and expanding paid sick and family leave and fair work week protections
- Advance technologies to protect the environment
- Adequately fund the AML / Black Lung Trust Fund
- Ensure ability for workers in green job economy to unionize
- Ensure safe and healthy work spaces for workers
- Create pathways for worker compensation when labor laws are violated

# LABOR (CONT.)



*Courtesy of UE Local 56*

## **OTHER LABOR-RELATED ITEMS:**

- End public funding for automation
- Establish a universal basic income
- Require corporations to be community-based
- Provide universal childcare
- Eliminate gendered division of labor across and within sectors
- Eliminate race/gender income gaps
- Ensure safe and healthy workspaces

In many areas of our lives, basic needs are still not met. Access to affordable, healthy food remains a challenge—in a state with millions of acres of farmland. Healthcare costs are still barriers to getting care and healthcare practices are barriers to trusting care—in a state with premiere health care providers. Cost, limited hours, and limited routes make getting from place to place by public transit in urban, suburban, and even rural areas difficult—in a state where people rely on transit to get around. Racism, nativism, sexism and discrimination persist—in a state whose constitution guarantees equal rights based on race, ethnicity, and sex. All of these challenges make living in the commonwealth difficult for many, if not near impossible.

We want a commonwealth where people’s basic needs are always met. We want a commonwealth where people will be comfortable, safe, healthy, and secure in their bodies and their environments. People will thrive only when they are secure and able to get where they need to go, whether to work, to the doctor, or to take care of family. These basic needs are the foundation for a thriving, healthy Pennsylvania.

## **FOOD:**

- Invest in community gardens
- Localize food systems
- Prevent food insecurity
- Promote food co-operatives
- Ensure community access to locally sourced, culturally-relevant healthy food options

# SOCIAL JUSTICE (CONT.)



## HEALTH:

- Provide quality universal healthcare
- Prevent industries, including fossil fuel extractors, from negatively impacting people's health, especially those near and in environmental justice communities
- Eliminate the use of PFAS
- Forbid the use of fracking brine on roadways and hold violators accountable
- Invest in green space projects in cities to prevent urban heat island effects and to address flooding issues
- Provide free testing for environmental harms like lead and PM2.5 in environmental justice communities, especially in homes of young children who should also be tested for lead
- Eliminate the institutionalized, unjust ways that the medical system discriminates against Black, Indigenous, and Latines/Latinx populations, and people of color in the medical field and in medical institutions



*Courtesy of Pittsburghers for Public Transit*

# SOCIAL JUSTICE (CONT.)



## TRANSPORTATION:

- Ensure that safe, reliable, environmentally-sustainable, and affordable public mass transit is accessible to all
- Fully fund public transit through dedicated and expanded state funding sources, with corporations paying their fair share
- Make investments towards infrastructure equity, including by ensuring that connections to critical amenities and transit stops are accessible, safe, and dignified



*Courtesy of Pittsburghers for Public Transit*

## BROADBAND:

- Expand and ensure broadband access across the commonwealth, including the technology required to use broadband

# DEMOCRACY



Democracy is in peril in Pennsylvania and across our country. There are ongoing efforts here to undermine the official results of the 2020 election, to make it more difficult for people to vote, and to gerrymander disproportionate representation into our state and federal legislative districts. Additionally, corporations and private interests continue to sway political decisions and politicians who make them.

In order to achieve a safe, secure, and healthy future for all residents, our commonwealth must uphold and enhance democracy. Voting rights should be protected and expanded. People, not corporations, should hold power—and corporations should not be considered people. For Pennsylvania to be a commonwealth for all, Pennsylvania must be a democracy for all.

## **BUILDING POWER:**

- Teach people how to build and exercise power
- Support unity and community building



*Courtesy of 215 People's Alliance*

# DEMOCRACY (CONT.)



## PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY:

- Get private money out of politics by adopting public campaign financing
- Make state funding and other opportunities more accessible to all communities, especially those with limited resources and capacity
- In-language and culturally competent community education about government services, public health crises, environmental pollution, and more
- Adopt ranked choice voting and a binding “None of the Above” option
- Ensure that all means of voting, democratic participation, and official documents are physically accessible, written at widely accessible reading levels, and, based on communities’ needs, available in additional languages
- Require public officials at all levels to engage in meaningful community outreach and conversations when major political decisions are being made
- Ban judicial gerrymandering
- Ensure that voting machines must have voter-verified paper trails (not Philadelphia-style bar codes)
- Ensure the security of elections through the use of voter-hand-marked paper ballots, optical scan counter voting machines, ballot-marking devices, and regular post-election audits of paper ballots

# DEMOCRACY (CONT.)



- Adopt binding Initiative & Referendum statewide, and for all county and municipal governments, which would allow residents to bypass the state legislature and place proposed statutes on the ballot for voter approval
- Join the National Popular Vote compact
- Automatic voter registration
- Allow incarcerated persons to vote



*Courtesy of Pittsburghers for Public Transit*

## **VOTING JUSTICE:**

- Make leaders more accountable to the communities they represent
- Allow early voting
- Improve language access [in voting process]
- Ensure racial equity in redistricting
- Make mail-in ballots legal for all future elections and ensure that voters have access to them in all elections

# DEMOCRACY (CONT.)



## **DECARCERATION:**

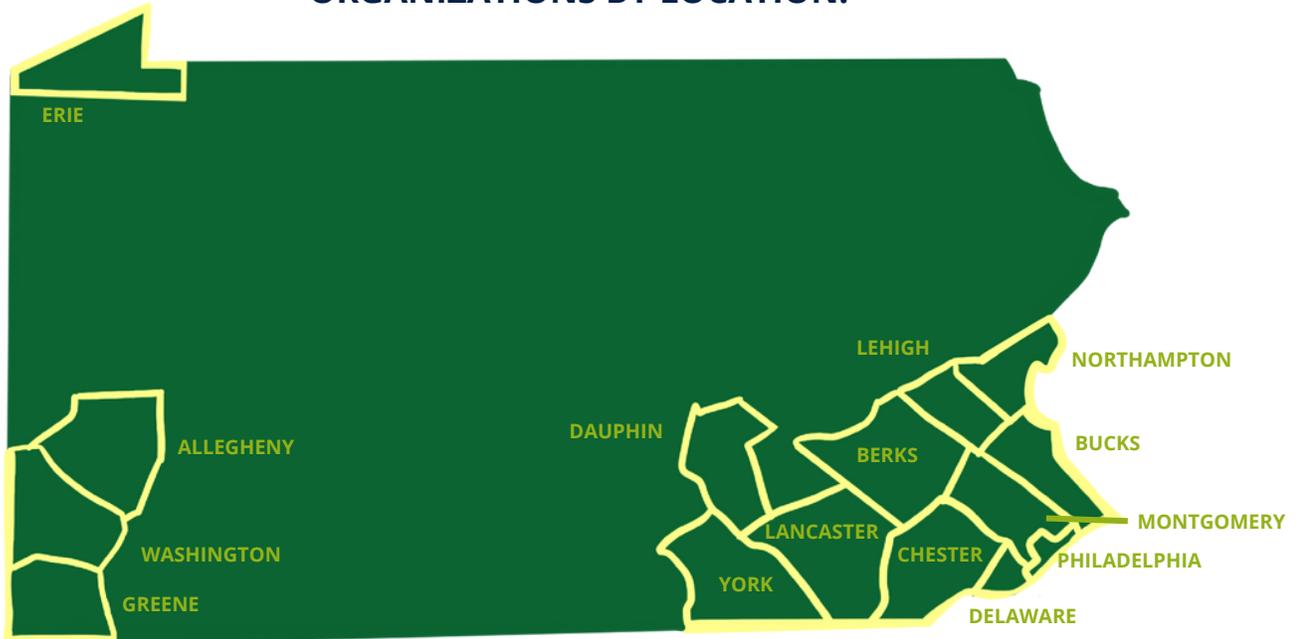
- End mandatory life without parole sentencing
  - End imprisonment for non-violent crimes of poverty (rewrite the crimes code)
  - Establish 20 year maximum sentences for all offenses (except those where the offender is deemed to be a danger to the community, i.e., serial rapists/mass or repeat murderers)
  - Limit parole and probation to five year maximums or less
  - End solitary confinement
  - End imprisonment of the mentally; provide appropriate facilities, with properly trained staff and treatment
  - Permit offender/victim resolutions (Community Courts)
  - Create Police Citizen Review Boards with subpoena and termination powers
  - Provide free telecommunications for incarcerated persons
  - Shut down Berks Family Detention Center
-

# GET INVOLVED

## People's Plan for PA Climate Justice

If you are interested in getting involved with this work, contact us at [info@peoplesplanforpa.org](mailto:info@peoplesplanforpa.org) or contact the organization in your area.

### ORGANIZATIONS BY LOCATION:



#### STATEWIDE (PENNSYLVANIA)

1199 SEIU  
Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration  
Ohio River Valley Institute  
PA Climate Equity Table  
PA Working Families Party  
Physicians for Social Responsibility PA  
Sierra Club  
Sunrise PA

#### ALLEGHENY

32Bj SEIU  
Black Environmental Collective  
Hill District Consensus Group  
One PA  
Pittsburgh United  
Pittsburghers for Public Transit  
UrbanKind Institute

#### BERKS

Make the Road  
PA Stands Up

#### BUCKS

POWER Interfaith

#### CHESTER & DELAWARE

Energy Justice Network  
POWER Interfaith

#### DAUPHIN

CASA  
POWER Interfaith

#### ERIE

United Electrical, Radio &  
Machine Workers of  
America (UE)

#### GREENE

Center for Coalified Justice

#### LANCASTER & YORK

CASA  
PA Stands Up  
POWER Interfaith

#### LEHIGH & NORTHAMPTON

Make the Road  
PA Stands Up  
POWER Interfaith

#### MONTGOMERY

Energy Justice Network  
POWER Interfaith

#### PHILADELPHIA

215 People's Alliance  
Energy Justice Network  
Make the Road  
One PA  
PA Stands Up  
Philly Thrive  
POWER Interfaith

#### WASHINGTON

Center for Coalified Justice

[peoplesplanforpa.org](https://peoplesplanforpa.org)

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via UrbanKind Institute**