

Report outlines how to make equity part of California's low-carbon economy

September 14 2016, by Jacqueline Sullivan

Governor Jerry Brown's signing last week of two landmark climate bills, SB 32 and AB 197, demonstrates the emergence of a powerful coalition of environmentalists, labor unions and grassroots "environmental justice" organizations that will be crucial to achieving the new emissions goals, as explained in a new report by the University of California, Berkeley and the University of Southern California.

The report, "Advancing Equity in California Climate Policy: A New Social Contract for Low-Carbon Transition," identifies ways to reduce [greenhouse gas emissions](#) while ensuring that the low-income and working class in California do not bear the brunt of the costs and are included in the benefits of the state's transition to a low-carbon economy.

"Labor and [environmental justice](#) are two sides of the same equity coin," said Carol Zabin, Chair of the Donald Vial Center for Employment in the Green Economy and a co-author of the report. "We show how California's ambitious emissions targets can be implemented in ways that benefit California's workers and most [disadvantaged communities](#) who are hardest hit by climate change and related environmental degradation." she said.

Key Recommendations:

- Expand low carbon programs, like community solar programs and energy efficiency in the public and institutional sectors, that

create good jobs and prioritize low-income communities, rather than individual homeowners and the more affluent.

- Promote labor standards, including skilled workforce and local hire provisions on renewable energy, energy efficiency, and other "green jobs" that are publicly funded—as is already occurring in utility-scale projects under California's Renewables Portfolio Standard.
- Monitor "pollution hotspots" in disadvantaged communities with strict evaluation and data collection that assesses the relationship of the cap and trade program and local emissions, followed by corrective action if excessive pollution is found.
- Establish "Green Zones" in California's most disadvantaged communities to focus investments in comprehensive emissions reduction and community resilience investments, via community planning that includes environmental justice and labor organizations.
- Start planning now for protecting workers and communities who may later be affected by the decline of greenhouse gas emitting industries. While California is not expected to lose jobs in the short term, the risk of job loss may grow as the state nears the emissions reduction targets set for 2050, especially in oil and gas extraction and refining.
- Develop an annual Climate Equity Report based on tracking equity outcomes to enable state officials to monitor whether equity goals have been reached, and identify areas where climate policy should be improved to advance equity.

More information: "Advancing Equity in California Climate Policy: A New Social Contract for Low-Carbon Transition," [laborcenter.berkeley.edu/pdf/2 ... Advancing-Equity.pdf](https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/pdf/2...Advancing-Equity.pdf)

Provided by University of California - Berkeley

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