

ENVIRONMENTAL & CLIMATE JUSTICE: CLEAN WATER

Securing the Right to Clean Water: A Call for Legislative Action

Black communities are disproportionately impacted by unsafe drinking water, even in today's society. Recent issues in Jackson, MS, and ongoing water issues in Houston, Baltimore, Philadelphia and Allensworth are evidence that the fight for clean water in Black communities continues. Decisions regarding where funding for testing and better water infrastructure come from can occur at the state level. Additionally, across the country, water filters and testing are typically not affordable for those who need these resources the most. We urge state legislators to prioritize and enforce policies ensuring access to clean and safe water for all citizens. This brief highlights the critical need for legislative action to address water quality issues, particularly in underserved and marginalized communities, and outlines key policy recommendations to safeguard this fundamental human right.

Background

Access to clean water is both a major necessity and a major public health issue, with significant implications for community well-being, economic stability, and social justice. Many communities, especially the Black community and others that are historically marginalized, suffer from inadequate water infrastructure, leading to water contamination and health crises.

The lack of access to clean water overwhelmingly negatively affects:

- Low-income communities and communities of color.
- Regions with outdated or poorly maintained water infrastructure, which are often found in Black communities.
- Areas with industrial pollution and inadequate environmental regulations.

The NAACP's Stance:

Clean water is a basic human right and should be accessible to all, regardless of socio-economic status or racial background. Every level of government- state, federal and local- bear the responsibility that its' citizens have access to critical necessities, including safe drinking water. The input and wellbeing of all communities must be factored in to water policies, and any conversations on this critical policy issue.

Recommendations

1. Invest in Water Infrastructure: Allocate funds for the modernization and maintenance of water systems, especially in underserved areas and areas in which water infrastructure is inadequate or dilapidated.

2. Enforce Water Quality Standards: Implement and strictly enforce regulations on pollutants and contaminants in water sources.
3. Monitor and Report Water Quality: Establish transparent systems for regular monitoring of water quality and public reporting of the findings.

Community Engagement and Support:

1. Involve local communities in decision-making processes and provide education on water conservation and safety.
2. Emergency Response Plans: Develop robust emergency response plans for water crises, ensuring quick and equitable distribution of clean water during emergencies.

The NAACP calls on state legislators to take immediate and decisive action to ensure that every citizen has access to clean and safe water. By prioritizing investments in water infrastructure and enforcing strict water quality standards, we can protect public health, promote equity in a foundational life necessity, and uphold the basic human right to clean water.