

**2025**  
**Annual Report**  
**State of Illinois Commission on Environmental Justice**



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## Background

The [Illinois Environmental Justice Act \(415 ILCS 155/1 et seq.\)](#) established the Illinois Commission on Environmental Justice (EJ Commission). The principle of EJ requires that no segment of the population, regardless of race, national origin, age, or income, should bear disproportionately high or adverse effects of environmental pollution.

Section 10(d) of the Environmental Justice Act establishes the Commission’s duties. Those duties are:

1. Advise State entities on environmental justice and related community issues.
2. Review and analyze the impact of current State laws and policies on the issue of environmental justice and sustainable communities.
3. Assess the adequacy of State and local laws to address the issue of environmental justice and sustainable communities.
4. Develop criteria to assess whether communities in the State may be experiencing environmental justice issues.
5. Recommend options to the Governor for addressing issues, concerns, or problems related to environmental justice that surface after reviewing State laws and policies, including prioritizing areas of the State that need immediate attention.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency provides administrative support to the EJ Commission.

## EJ Commission Membership

### Statutory Agencies

1. *Jose Burgos* (designee), Illinois Department of Natural Resources
2. *Gerrin Cheek Butler* (designee), Illinois Department of Public Health
3. *David Esposito* (designee), Illinois Department of Human Services, Housing Office
4. *Brandy Phillips* (designee), Illinois Department of Transportation
5. *Chris Pressnall* (designee), Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
6. *Isabel Velez-Diez* (designee), Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

### Elected Officials

7. *Senator Celina Villanueva*, Senate Democratic representative
8. *Representative Kimberly Du Buclet*, House Democratic representative
9. Vacant, Senate Minority Representative
10. Vacant, House Minority Representative

### Governor Appointees

11. *Victoria Young*, Chair, affected communities concerned with environmental justice, Naturally Urban Environmental, Inc.
12. *Pratigyan Bhusal*, member of the public, United Congregations of Metro East
13. *Donovan Griffith*, member, business organization, Illinois Manufacturer's Association
14. *Chynna Hampton*, member, labor organization, Climate Jobs IL- AFL-CIO
15. *Tonyisha Harris*, member, environmental organization, The Nature Conservancy
16. *Cheryl Johnson*, member, affected communities concerned with environmental justice, People for Community Recovery
17. *Marcus Jordan*, member, labor organization, Illinois, Iowa Foundation for Fair Contracting
18. *Marcella Keenan Corona*, local government, Climate Justice & Environmental Sustainability Consultant
19. *Samarth Medakkar*, member, business organization, Advanced Energy United
20. *Dulce Ortiz*, member, affected communities concerned with environmental justice, Clean Power Lake County
21. *Ashish Sharma*, member, expert on environmental health and environmental justice, Discovery Partners Institute, U of I System
22. *Stephen Sylvester*, member of the public, Illinois Attorney General's Office
23. Vacant, member, affected communities concerned with environmental justice
24. Vacant, member, environmental organization

The EJ Commission is subject to the [Open Meetings Act](#) (OMA), which establishes requirements for conducting meetings, including the requirement to have a quorum to take official action. The EJ Commission is currently at quorum, with more than 13 out of the 24 voting members active. As of October 2025, the EJ Commission has a total of 4 vacancies, outlined above. EJ Commission members have been actively seeking additional members and encouraging interested parties to submit applications through the Boards and Commissions webpage.

## 2025 Quarterly Meetings

EJ Commission meetings are open to the public and anyone interested may participate. The level of public participation throughout the meetings typically have not exceeded more than five people. Overall input from the public has enhanced the Commission's work through steering agenda topics and keeping the mission of advancing environmental justice efforts at the State a top priority. The EJ Commission

meets quarterly (*see Appendix A for copies of 2025 agendas*). Links to past and upcoming meeting agendas, notices, recordings, and minutes can be found on the Illinois EPA [Commission on Environmental Justice meetings webpage](#).

Significant topics and action items throughout 2025 meetings included the formation of three subcommittees to better focus on key issues, and the development of Commission draft bylaws. Additional topics covered included a presentation from the State of Illinois Climate Advisor on the Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (CPRG) and discussions around the shift in the federal administration regarding prioritization of EJ.

## Subcommittees

Following the second-quarterly meeting in June, the EJ Commission formed three subcommittees to better focus on key issues. The formation of these subcommittees was informed by results from a survey that was developed based on key issues of previous discussions, and participation and input from Commissioners. Commissioners voted on subcommittee chairs, and they each held their kick-off meetings prior to the third quarterly meeting that was held on August 20. Outlined below are key takeaways and next steps for each subcommittee. See Appendix B for Subcommittee structure (e.g. list of subcommittee participants).

### **EJ Policy & Legislative Affairs Subcommittee**

- Meet with Staff to define the appropriate process to engage with State laws and processes
- Meet with stakeholders and constituents to gather feedback on desired changes to existing laws and policies
- Present recommendations regarding updates for existing laws and policies, and/or recommendations regarding legislation proposed in the forthcoming legislative session

### **Funding Equity & Workforce Development Subcommittee**

- Emphasize alignment of workforce development programs (e.g., CEJA, IL Works Jobs Program Act)
- Build strong relationships with DCEO to better support equitable workforce opportunities
- Engage entities (e.g., intergovernmental agencies, non-profit, private) and community stakeholders

### **Air, Water, Soil Quality Monitoring & Enforcement Subcommittee**

- Identify gaps in environmental monitoring and enforcement activities being done to implement existing environmental regulations
- Provide a summary on environmental justice and accessibility related actions that state agencies are pursuing
- Review potential legislative topics/priority areas with focus on permitting reforms, safe drinking water, newer topics including data center oversight (e.g., potential water discharge concerns, electricity demands), and its alignment with Illinois Water Plan Report and extreme heat protection plans (e.g., Workplace Extreme Temperature Safety Act (HB 3762/SB 2501))

## Bylaws

The Commission this year developed draft bylaws to help the body in its organizational structure. The bylaws provide clarity and transparency around Commission membership, appointment procedures,

meeting requirements, and statutory responsibilities. The Commission aims to engage in an in-depth review and discussion of the draft bylaws during the fourth quarterly meeting of this year.

## **Goals for end-of-year 2025 – Year 2026**

Illinois EPA, as the administrative support agency to the Commission, consulted with the Commission Chair, Victoria Young, as well as Commission members on the goals outlined below.

### **1. Procedural Engagements**

- Discuss, develop, and submit comments to state agencies on their plans and policies

### **2. Work Products**

- Analyze commission state agency responses to EJ-related questions developed by Commissioners to identify gaps and provide recommendations

### **3. Emerging Issues**

- Discuss, develop, and submit comments to state agencies on identifying emerging environmental justice issues on climate resiliency and extreme weather; energy transition and equity; industrial and technology impacts; and community engagement and data transparency

## Appendix

### Appendix A: 2025 Quarterly Commission Meeting Agendas

\*Publicly available at Illinois EPA Commission [Meetings Webpage](#).



#### ILLINOIS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MEETING AGENDAS

##### **Wednesday, March 19, 2025 (1:00 pm – 3:00 pm CT via Webex)**

- I. Welcome & Opening Remarks
- II. Introductions & Roll Call
- III. Topics
  - Revisit 2024 Yearly Report
  - Federal EJ Updates & Illinois EPA Updates
  - 2025 Trainings & Housekeeping
  - Discuss 2025 Workplan, Priorities, and Bylaws
- IV. Open Discussion & Questions
- V. Next Meeting Dates and Location
- VI. Adjournment

##### **Wednesday, June 4, 2025 (1:00 pm – 3:00 pm CT via Webex)**

- I. Welcome, Opening Remarks, & Call to Order
- II. Introductions & Roll Call
- III. Commissioner Approval
  - March 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes and Discussion Topics of the Day
- IV. Topics
  - Illinois Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (CPRG) Program
  - Shared Platform: Microsoft Teams
  - Subcommittee Survey: Review & Vote on Subcommittee Structure, Path Forward
  - Bylaws: Aim is to be adopted and voted on August 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting
- V. Open Discussion & Questions
- VI. Next Meeting Dates & Location
- VII. Adjournment

##### **Wednesday, August 20, 2025 (1:00 pm – 3:00 pm CT via Webex)**

- I. Welcome, Opening Remarks, & Call to Order
- II. Introductions & Roll Call
- III. Commissioner Approval
  - June 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes and Discussion Topics of the Day
- IV. Topics
  - Bylaws Discussion & Review
  - Subcommittees Debrief
  - Draft 2025 Yearly Report Review
  - Annual Trainings Reminder
- V. Open Discussion/Questions
- VI. Next Meeting Dates and Location
- VII. Adjournment

## Appendix B: EJ Commission Subcommittee Structure

**Voted and Approved on June 4, 2025.**

\*Publicly available at Illinois EPA Commission on [EJ Subcommittees Webpage](#).

### **Subcommittee: Air, Water, Soil Quality Monitoring & Enforcement**

*Kick-off Meeting held July 31, 2025*

Participants:

1. Ashish Sharma, Chair
2. Dulce Ortiz
3. Chris Pressnall, IEPA
4. Gerrin Cheek-Butler, IDPH
5. Victoria Wilson, Co-Chair
6. Stephen (Steve) Sylvester

### **Subcommittee: Funding Equity & Workforce Development**

*Kick-off Meeting held August 6, 2025*

Participants:

1. Marcus Jordan, Chair
2. David Esposito, IDHS
3. Jose Burgos, IDNR
4. Chynna Hampton
5. Brandy Phillips, IDOT
6. Tonyisha Harris

### **Subcommittee: EJ Policy & Legislative Affairs**

*Kick-off Meeting held August 13, 2025*

Participants:

1. Marcella Kennan Corona, Chair
2. Cheryl Johnson
3. Donovan Griffith
4. Isabel Velez-Diez, IDCEO
5. Pratigyan (Prati) Bhusal
6. Representative DuBuclet
7. Senate Majority Representative Celina Villanueva
8. Samarth Medakkar