



For Immediate Release

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Texas Legislator Proposes to Amend State Constitution to Include Environmental Rights

Austin, TX: Texas State Legislator Vicki Goodwin proposed a Joint Resolution that, if passed, will provide Texans the opportunity to decide if they want to amend the Texas Constitution to add enforceable environmental rights. The Joint Resolution proposing the amendment was filed February 21, 2023.

The Joint Resolution proposes amending the state constitution's Bill of Rights to recognize and protect the rights of all of the people of Texas "to a clean and healthy environment" including water, air, soil, native flora and fauna, as well as to the natural, human health, and other beneficial qualities of the environment. The amendment – being referred to as the Stewardship Amendment --- also requires all arms of government in the state to "conserve, protect, and maintain" the states natural resources for both present and future generations.

"With this amendment Texas joins over a dozen other states across the nation seeking to recognize environmental rights as fundamental inalienable rights deserving the same highest protection that is currently given to speech, religious, civil and property rights," said **Maya van Rossum, author of the book The Green Amendment and founder of the national Green Amendments For The Generations** movement and organization that is seeking to advance constitutional environmental rights nationally. van Rossum was also a lead plaintiff in the Pennsylvania case that secured constitutional environmental rights for the people of that state and from which she launched this national vision for constitutional change. "Our current system of environmental laws and government, in Texas and nationwide, focuses on permitting pollution rather than preventing it. By contrast, constitutional Green Amendments ensure government officials are making informed decisions focused on protecting environmental rights from the beginning of the decision-making process when protection is best accomplished. Green Amendments are also powerful for advancing environmental justice protections by ensuring government officials are protecting the environmental rights of all people equitably, regardless of race, ethnicity or socioeconomics," added van Rossum.

"State action is critical to advancing environmental justice and addressing systemic health inequities. Texas is now one of over a dozen states where grassroots efforts to protect environmental rights for current and future generations are underway, making it clear that the Green Amendment movement is picking up speed across the U.S." offered, Kate Burgess, NCEL Conservation Program Manager.

Once the Joint Resolution is passed by a 2/3 vote in each house of the legislature, it will be placed on the statewide ballot for a vote by the people.

Currently constitutional amendments of this kind (often referred to as Green Amendments because they fulfill the essential criteria that give highest recognition to environmental rights on par with other human, civil and political rights) exist in Pennsylvania, Montana and New York. In addition to Texas, constitutional Green Amendments of this kind are being advanced in nearly a dozen others states, including but not limited to, New Mexico, New Jersey, Maine, Florida, Hawaii, Iowa, and Delaware.

The Resolution proposing the Stewardship Amendment reads:

SECTION 1. Article I, Texas Constitution, is amended by adding Section 36 to read as follows:

Sec. 36. (a) The public, individually and collectively, has the right to a clean and healthy environment, including clean water, clean air, healthy soil, and diverse and abundant native flora and fauna, and to the preservation of the natural, cultural, scenic, recreational, and healthful qualities of the environment. The right to a clean and healthy environment is inherent, inalienable, indefeasible, and equal with other protected inalienable rights of liberty reserved to the public. The state shall equitably protect this right for the public and may not take any action to infringe on this right.

(b) The public natural resources of this state are the common property of all persons, including future generations. The state, including the legislative, judicial, and executive branches and each state agency and political subdivision, shall conserve, protect, and maintain the state's public natural resources for the benefit of the public, including future generations.

(c) This section is self-executing.

More information can be found at www.TXGreenAmendment.org & www.ForTheGenerations.org .

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