



For Immediate Release:

March 14, 2024

Contacts:

Maya K. van Rossum, Founder of national Green Amendments For The Generations,
maya@forthegenerations.org , 215-801-3043 (phone & text)

**NJ Senate Environment & Energy Committee Votes in Support of
the New Jersey Green Amendment Protecting Environmental Rights**

Trenton, NJ: After 6 years since first being proposed, the New Jersey Green Amendment received a vote in the Senate Environment and Energy Committee. In a packed room of observers, the amendment passed by a vote of 3 yes, 1 no and 1 abstention. It is unclear what will be the next committee stop for the amendment, but this was an important first step.

The NJ Green Amendment was first proposed in December 2017. While the amendment was the subject of a hearing before the Senate Environment and Energy Committee on October 15, 2018, and passed out of committee at that time by a bi-partisan super-majority vote, the amendment has been allowed to languish unconsidered ever since. Given the positive words from Committee Chair Senator Smith, telling supporters they needed to be proactive in advocating for the amendment, it is expected that this year the amendment will continue forward procedurally.

The NJ Green Amendment was re-proposed for 2024 legislative consideration by Senator Linda Greenstein and Senator Andrew Zwicker. The proposed amendment would add constitutional environmental rights to the State constitution's bill of rights.

“We in Newark know the environment and public health is not a partisan issue. It is neither conservative nor liberal, but it's certainly right, to limit government's infringement on people's rights, including the right to breathe clean air and drink clean water, and that's what this constitutional amendment does, let's get it done!” **Kim Gaddy, Executive Director, South Ward Environmental Alliance.**

According to **Maya K. van Rossum, the founder and leader of the national Green Amendment For The Generations movement, who also serves as the Delaware Riverkeeper and leader of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network**, an advocacy and litigation organization active in New Jersey, “the people of New Jersey have been eager to see the NJ Green Amendment advance. This amendment could also put New Jersey at the forefront of the climate movement. If the amendment receives the 3/5 vote needed from each legislative house, New Jersey would not only be on track to be the 4th state nationwide to secure Green Amendment protections, but it could be the 1st state in the nation to explicitly require their

government to ensure protections for the climate; that would be a powerful inspiration for other communities and states pursuing their own Green Amendment protections.”

“As an Environmental Justice Leader, I both reside in an overburdened community and advocate on behalf of EJ communities throughout the state and nation. Each community, while unique, are all at a disadvantage when it comes to the right to clean water and clean air. I agree with Assemblyman McKeon of Essex County - that New Jersey has done well by advancing the strongest environmental justice bill nationwide and putting forth some of the strongest PFAS protections in the nation. Nevertheless, New Jersey residents residing in overburdened communities, are still facing deadly environmental hazards; as well as equity issues throughout our state. Now is the time for New Jersey’s Legislature to raise the bar higher, and protect the rights of present and future generations,” said **Terrance L. Bankston, a member of the New Jersey Environmental Justice Advisory Council (EJAC) and the Senior Ports and Freight Campaigner for Friends of the Earth (FoE)**

“New Jersey has a real opportunity to become a national leader by adding a Green Amendment to its state constitution. Two of New Jersey’s neighbors— New York and Pennsylvania – already have Green Amendments; and downstream Delaware is considering passage of its own Green Amendment. New Jersey could become a keystone leader in this movement by recognizing and protecting the inalienable rights to clean air, pure water, healthy environments, and a stable climate and giving them the constitutional backing they should have always had,” says **Anneke van Rossum, Advocacy and Policy Coordinator at the Delaware Riverkeeper Network.**

Erica Beverett, Outreach & Community Engagement Coordinator for 'Parents Engaging Parents, Inc.' (PEPNJ), a statewide parent advocacy group & for 'Social Responsibility Through Me' of Camden, NJ explains, "New Jersey water is tainted with toxins like PFAS that is now running through our bodies. It is causing countless health issues for myself and my children. Thyroid issues, diabetes, and cancer are plaguing our families. Skin disorders, hyper-sensitive bodies, and allergic reactions that come from our environment are killing us. From the water we bathe in and the air we breathe to the snowball effect of economic hardship for countless families. Polluters are killing us. To contextualize these facts with numbers, we have spent 5 Billion dollars on treatment which burdens our communities and our families. We have 9.6 Million children suffering from eczema being raised in overburdened communities. 50% of our children will develop asthma from the onset of eczema. The lack of regard for clean air and water for all is killing us! Let's catch up to New York and adopt the New Jersey Green Amendment into our state's constitution."

“In Montana, we’ve already seen young people used a Green Amendment to defend our collective futures. Growing up under the shadow of climate change, I can’t begin to explain the kind of hope that brings us students. But as my dad likes to remind me, as his child, I’m not responsible for his health. The climate crisis is already hurting people today, other kinds of pollution hurt people today, and those of us you refer to as “future generations” can’t solve that. These abstract concepts of a “stable climate”, “pure air” and “clean water” have real meaning to real people’s abilities to live and work in New Jersey, and it’s the responsibility of those with power to take action now, and give voters the opportunity to choose a Green

Amendment: a tool to protect the rights they deserve,” said **Svanfridur Mura, High School Co-Chair of the NJ Student Sustainability Coalition.**

“Let us remember that our duty to protect and preserve the waters of life is not just a legal or policy imperative, but a spiritual obligation that connects us to the very essence of existence. In recognizing the inherent rights of all beings to clean water, fresh air, and a healthy environment, we affirm our interconnectedness with the web of life and acknowledge our responsibility to protect and uphold these rights for present and future generations. May our discussion and actions today in the state of New Jersey reflect our commitment to be stewards of the Earth, guardians of the waters, and champions of equity and justice for all beings,” said **Rachel Dawn Davis, Public Policy & Justice Organizer for Waterspirit.**

According to the Green Amendments For The Generations organization, there are active efforts to secure constitutional Green Amendments spanning the nation. Active Green Amendment proposals currently exist in 15 states, with proposals in more expected soon. Green Amendments already passed in Pennsylvania, Montana, and most recently New York, are demonstrating the powerful protection constitutional environmental rights of this kind can provide, with the *Held v. Montana* legal victory being the most recent, but certainly not the only one.

van Rossum coined the term “Green Amendment” and founded the national Green Amendment movement in 2014 in order to secure constitutional environmental rights protection in every state nationwide, and ultimately at the federal level.

“Constitutional Green Amendments are a special type of constitutional environmental rights amendment. By placing environmental rights in a state constitution’s Bill of Rights, using carefully crafted language that creates an enforceable right of the people that is self-executing and generational, Green Amendments ensure the highest constitutional protection for the environment, placing environmental rights on par with other fundamental freedoms such as speech and religion,” **explains van Rossum.**

Additional information on active states and the national Green Amendment movement can be found at www.ForTheGenerations.org

The proposed New Jersey Green Amendment passed by today’s Committee vote reads as follows:

Amend Article I of the New Jersey State Constitution by adding a new paragraph 24 to read as follows:

(a) Every person has a right to a clean and healthy environment, including pure water, clean air, a safe climate, and ecologically healthy habitats, and to the preservation of the natural and scenic qualities of the environment. The State shall not infringe upon these rights.

(b) The State’s natural resources, among them its waters, air, flora, fauna, climate, and public lands, are the common property of all the people, including both present and future generations. The State shall serve as trustee of these resources, and shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all people.

(c) This paragraph and the rights stated herein are (1) self-executing, and (2) shall be in addition to any rights conferred by the public trust doctrine or common law. Nothing in this paragraph shall abrogate the applicable Rules of Court that prohibit the filing of frivolous claims.

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