



For Immediate Release

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Press Release: New Jersey Legislators & Organizations Say It's Time For A Green Amendment—NOW!

TRENTON, NJ – As electricity rates soar, over 80 AI data centers now consume energy in the Garden State. Cities overburdened by polluting industries, including Newark and Camden, continue to face drastic environmental injustices. All the while, climate change is eroding our shores and safety. In response, environmental advocates in New Jersey believe a statewide constitutional Green Amendment is the way forward.

On Thursday, March 5, 2026, leading Green Amendment advocates and partners met with members of the press over Zoom to discuss New Jersey's increasingly urgent need for an environmental rights amendment in its state Bill of Rights.

The press conference discussed the importance of introducing Green Amendment protections to the state of New Jersey, which would make the State a trustee of public natural resources and guarantee to the people other environmental rights including clean air, clean water, and a safe and healthy environment. Organizational representatives from across New Jersey joined the conference to share their perspectives on why Green Amendment protections are needed now, including representatives from

Green Amendments For The Generations, Pinelands Alliance, Waterspirit, Delaware Riverkeeper Network, League of Women Voters of New Jersey, Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC), Empower New Jersey, Food and Water Watch New Jersey, New Jersey Conservation Foundation, New Jersey Gateway Chapter of the Climate Reality Project, New Jersey Highlands Coalition, Parents Engaging Parents New Jersey, Ramapough Munsee Lenape Nation, and Unitarian Universalist FaithAction NJ.

Senator Andrew Zwicker (District 16) and Assemblyman Balvir Singh (District 7), the primary sponsors of the New Jersey Green Amendment in the Senate and the Assembly, joined the conference to share why they continue to champion Green Amendment protections for all New Jerseyans. The New Jersey Green Amendment is filed as [SCR27](#) in the 2026-2027 legislative session; an Assembly bill is forthcoming.

“For 9 years, the people of New Jersey have urged state legislators to hold hearings and pass the NJ Green Amendment so that the people of the state could vote on whether they wanted to amend their state constitution to include a right of the people to clean and healthy water, air, soils, climate and environment. Throughout this time, government leaders have stood in the way, misusing their power to deny hearings and stop the conversation about whether the inalienable human right to a clean, safe and healthy environment should be honored, respected and protected in New Jersey,” **said Maya K. van Rossum, Founder of the Green Amendments For The Generations organization and movement.** “New Jersey could be the 4th state in the nation to pass a Green Amendment, and the 1st to explicitly recognize the right to a safe and stable climate system. There is no good reason for legislators to stand in the way of the People’s right to decide whether they want to amend their state constitution.”

“The New Jersey Green Amendment is about putting power where it belongs, in the hands of the people, to protect the air they breathe, the water they drink, and the communities they call home. While New Jersey has long been at the forefront of environmental policy, the risks of relying too heavily on regulatory protections alone are becoming increasingly clear. A power grab for polluters is happening before our eyes. As federal protections are rolled back, including efforts to limit states’ authority under the Clean Water Act and the withdrawal of the Endangerment Finding that underpins national climate policy, we are reminded how quickly long-standing safeguards can erode when they are not secured with the highest level of protection. We are reminded that no legal or regulatory protections are safe from tampering, not even the Pinelands Protection Act,” **said Stephen Elliott, Director of Watershed Programs, Pinelands Alliance.** “Here in New Jersey, the stakes could not be higher. We have more Superfund sites than any other state, we are losing open space and farmland to continued overdevelopment, and we are now facing new pressures from the rapid expansion of data centers and other short-sighted development. These threats are real, immediate, and growing. Now is the time to act. The New Jersey Green Amendment will establish a constitutional right to a clean and healthy environment and require the state to prevent harm before it happens, not just respond after the damage is done. It will give every resident the power to defend their community and ensure these protections endure for generations to come.”

“The New Jersey Green Amendment is a concrete, effective way to secure a brighter future for generations yet to come, which necessarily includes access to a clean, safe, and healthy Delaware River,” **said Shaelyn Parker, River Protection & Environmental Rights Advocacy Associate, Delaware Riverkeeper Network.** “As a long-time supporter of the New Jersey Green Amendment, and a leader of the legal and advocacy efforts using Pennsylvania’s Green Amendment, Delaware Riverkeeper Network has witnessed first-hand how powerful these environmental protections are and can be. From securing cleanup of contaminated sites, to defeating over-reaching state laws that recklessly advance fossil fuels

at the expense of community health, to empowering everyday people to stand up and claim their environmental rights, a Green Amendment is the most powerful tool at our disposal to ensure a better tomorrow. We urge the New Jersey legislature to give the people a voice and vote on the New Jersey Green Amendment now.”

“The New Jersey Green Amendment recognizes a simple truth: every person deserves clean air, safe drinking water, and a healthy place to live. For too long, polluters have harmed communities, especially those already overburdened,” **said Allison McLeod, Interim Executive Director, New Jersey LCV.** “This amendment would make environmental rights part of our state Constitution, requiring the government to protect our natural resources and our people.”

“Passage of the NJ Green Amendment is a right that all citizens should have, current and future. All should have a constitutional right to clean air, water, soil and a healthy environment without interference of current political dogma,” **said Jeff Arnold, Conservation Chair, Appalachian Mountain Club Delaware Valley Chapter.**

“As a sophomore in high school, I’ve learned a lot about what the New Jersey Green Amendment promises to people and how much assurance it provides. I’ve spoken at various town councils to get their endorsement of the bill and set up tables at Earth Day fairs to spread awareness, and during this process of gaining support and delivering speeches, I learned that the Green Amendment isn’t just legal language, it’s a promise to ordinary families that their right to clean air and safe water will be protected. For someone like me who will inherit the future shaped by today’s decisions, that promise means everything,” **said Samhita Bairy, New Jersey Student Sustainability Coalition.**

“As a high school senior, I’ve advocated for the Green Amendment for three years. When the Amendment got a hearing in the Senate Environmental Commission, I skipped school to go and testify, because I believed, and still believe, in it being essential for my future. My generation will have to deal with climate change and its resulting food shortages, natural disasters, biodiversity loss, and environmental injustice. The Green Amendment gives young people a fighting chance to preserve what is left of natural resources in NJ and create an equitable future,” **said Elif Cam, New Jersey Student Sustainability Coalition.**

“Now is the time to take strong action to safeguard the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the food we eat,” **said Jennifer M. Coffey, Executive Director, Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC).** “We are witnessing unprecedented federal rollbacks of common sense, science based policies that have protected and restored our shared environment for generations. The Green Amendment is a constitutional declaration that we the people of New Jersey have rights to a clean environment, and we need to adopt it now.”

“Society knowingly degrades the environment as we increase our consumption of natural resources. There exist far better ways to conduct ourselves; yet we ignore science for the sake of expediency. We hide behind ‘best practices’- false claims that we are minimizing harm to air, land, water, flora, fauna, ecosystems, and ourselves! The Green Amendment will help us fight to establish long-term benefits to both people and the natural world, instead of avoiding real solutions by accepting smoke screens designed to encourage short-term profit,” **said Dr. Emile DeVito, Manager of Science & Stewardship, New Jersey Conservation Foundation.**

“The New Jersey Green Amendment affirms the fundamental right to clean air, pure water, and a healthy environment for all generations. For portside communities, this means ensuring that proven solutions like electrification of trucks and equipment using greener fuels and shore power on vessels are prioritized to reduce pollution and protect families’ health now. Constitutional protections help guarantee that Environmental Justice is not optional; it is a right,” **said Erica Beverett, Lead Organizer, Parents Engaging Parents New Jersey.**

“Camden for Clean Air in solidarity is advocating for the adoption of a New Jersey Green Amendment like in other existing states. This provision would be added to the states Bill of Rights and would recognize environmental protections to all people regardless of race, ethnicity or income. An inalienable right to healthy air, clean water and a healthy environment for future generations must be addressed as a human right protected by the duties of our elected officials. Generations of ecological deterioration in cities like Camden and watershed communities that had positive advancement are being jeopardized by Federal Rollbacks in environmental policies. The time is now for state legislative committees to advance this constitutional amendment ensuring the right to clean air and a healthy environment for all New Jerseyans,” **said Kevin Barfield, Executive Director, Camden For Clean Air.**

“In New Jersey's land use laws, respect for private property, the availability of affordable housing and the right to clean water, clean air and a healthy environment are equally important and fundamental principles in determining what can be developed and where. But only two of these are constitutionally protected—private property and the right to affordable housing. Lacking a Green Amendment in New Jersey we are seeing regulations that protect against flooding, and protect drinking water weakened, while inclusionary developments are granted exemptions from the regulations that protect the environment. Only a Green Amendment will restore balance in our land use regulations so that we can guarantee a safe and sustainable future,” **said Elliott Ruga, Policy & Communications Director, New Jersey Highlands Coalition.**

“When the federal government is actively undermining environmental protections in ways that may take generations to undo, it is up to us, on the state level, to stand up for our rights and pass the protective legislation we truly need. A New Jersey Green Amendment would close the corridor between Pennsylvania and New York, our neighbors who already have Green Amendments in their state constitutions, creating a protective corridor here in our region, making us stronger together,” **said Blair Nelsen, Executive Director, Waterspirit.**

“In our organizing work, NJ Food and Water Watch is focused on protecting New Jerseyans’ right to clean air and water. We want to hold polluters accountable for the damages done in our communities and preserve a livable future in our state. We support efforts that preserve our natural resources and protect the well-being of people and the planet,” **said Kate Delany, FWW NJ Senior Political Organizer, Food & Water Watch.**

“The right to clean air and water and a safe climate is a basic human right but we don't have it in New Jersey. Putting that right in our constitution alongside other rights and implementing it will make New Jersey more affordable and save lives. It will help alleviate rising costs from health care, property damage, taxes and utility bills. It will reduce death and disease from floods, extreme heat and pollution from the increasingly frequent and severe weather caused by human and fossil fuel induced climate change,” **said Empower NJ Steering Committee's David Pringle.** “Given flood deaths in Plainfield this summer, emergency room visits from asthmatics in Newark on all too frequent bad air days, increasing

wildfire risks from the Pinelands to the Highlands, extreme heat in urban areas last summer, and cold blue alerts due to the polar vortex this winter, clearly statutory protections aren't enough to protect people and property. We need constitutional protections to have this right and to make New Jersey more affordable, safer and healthier!”

“The Green Amendment is an opportunity to put those faith values we hold most precious into action. At a time when many feel powerless to make a real difference, this legislation makes explicit what shared faith values affirm as true: we are not only interconnected but interdependent. Our flourishing is and always has been mutual. Government must be held accountable for honoring the inalienable rights of all people. Our shared faith values demand nothing less,” **said Rev. Charles Loflin, Executive Director of UU FaithAction New Jersey.**

A recording of the press conference is available [here](#).

The press event was sponsored by organizations representing the coalition of support for the New Jersey Green Amendment: Green Amendments For The Generations, Pinelands Alliance, Waterspirit, Delaware Riverkeeper Network, League of Women Voters of New Jersey, Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC), Empower New Jersey, Food and Water Watch New Jersey, New Jersey Conservation Foundation, New Jersey Gateway Chapter of the Climate Reality Project, New Jersey Highlands Coalition, Parents Engaging Parents New Jersey, Ramapough Munsee Lenape Nation, Unitarian Universalist FaithAction NJ, Appalachian Mountain Club Delaware Valley Chapter, Camden For Clean Air, Clean Water Action New Jersey, New Jersey League of Conservation Voters, New Jersey Student Sustainability Coalition, and Ironbound Community Corporation.

Background: The New Jersey Green Amendment was first proposed during the lame duck session in December 2017. The Amendment has received two hearings since that time, each before the Senate Environment and Energy Committee, and passed both with majority support. However, absent further hearings before committees and the full congressional chambers, the Amendment has not advanced further in the legislative process.

The New Jersey Green Amendment, if passed through the legislature and a majority vote of the people, would enshrine New Jerseyans’ rights to clean air, pure water, a stable climate, and healthy ecosystems in the Bill of Rights section of the State constitution. This Bill of Rights placement would give environmental rights the same recognition and protection as other fundamental freedoms like free speech and freedom of religion.

As proposed, the New Jersey Green Amendment would read:

Article 1 will be amended to add...

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.

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.

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 Rules of Court that prohibit the filing of frivolous claims.

Awareness and engagement around the Amendment has grown across the state, with dozens of [organizations](#) and [municipalities](#) signing on, passing resolutions, and even hosting events to show support.

To learn more about the NJ Green Amendment and how you can get involved, visit www.NJGreenAmendment.org.

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