



ACA 16 – The California Green Amendment

SUMMARY

ACA 16 will amend the State’s constitution to enshrine the right to clean air, water, and a healthy environment for every Californian.

BACKGROUND

For many years, California has led the nation in combating the effects of climate change. From statutorily protecting the right to affordable drinking water, to advancing statewide air quality and emissions standards, California continues to lead. However, despite all of these efforts, the California Constitution still has no permanent environmental language in it. In fact, many other states are ahead of California in their efforts to establish the right to a healthy environment for all of their residents. These “Green Amendments” are becoming commonplace for states seeking to further protect and affirm environmental rights.

Most recently, in 2021, the state of New York proposed to amend its constitution to add environmental language. With a resounding 70% of the public voting in support, it is clear that green amendments are both necessary and desired. To date, Nevada, New Mexico, Hawaii, Connecticut, Texas, Maine, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Washington all have introduced green amendment language.

PROBLEM

California is a leader in environmental policy. Our state sets a tone for the nation and often the world. Still, the 40 million people who call California home do not have a fundamental right to clean air, water, and a healthy environment. Without a constitutional right, all of the progress we have made is momentary and subject to potential rollbacks. It also leaves California increasingly vulnerable to changes in federal policy. If our state is to continue making equitable environmental progress, it is imperative that we join the growing list of states who have moved to enshrine environmental rights in their constitutions.

SOLUTION

ACA 16 will codify the right to clean air, water, and a healthy environment for every Californian. It will provide a foundation for the laws the legislature has fought to pass, and provide a permanent guidepost for our longevity and sustainability. Moreover, ACA 16 has the potential to ensure that 1 in 8 Americans has the fundamental and constitutionally protected right to clean air, water, and a healthy environment.

SUPPORT

Center for Biological Diversity (co-sponsor)
Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (co-sponsor)
Community Water Center (co-sponsor)
Human Impact Partners (co-sponsor)
Green Amendments for the Generations (co-sponsor)
Climate Equity Policy Center (co-sponsor)
Sunrise Movement LA (co-sponsor)
NextGen CA
CA Climate Voters
Communities for a Better Environment

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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