

ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

At this moment, we are facing an existential climate emergency that, if not sufficiently and urgently addressed in the next several years, could seal the devastating fate of our planet, our families, our children, and generations to come. The majority of U.S. Latinos live in areas that have experienced devastating impacts of such extreme events, such as Hurricanes Irma and Maria in Puerto Rico, longer and stronger wildfires in California, flooding from sea level rise in Florida, and historic drought and heatwaves in Texas. NHLA strongly supports action, taken at all levels, to protect the health of communities and the planet, and to mitigate the growing climate crisis.

PRINCIPAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

CLIMATE EMERGENCY

- Support an immediate, urgent, and comprehensive response across the federal government to the climate crisis facing Latino communities and the planet with a persistent focus on the gendered impacts of climate change.
- Use science-based approaches and solutions to combat the climate emergency and return to participation and leadership in international efforts to address climate change.
- Build climate-prepared and resilient communities.
- Engage Latinos and impacted communities in the development of environmental laws, policies, and regulations.
- Create programs to deal humanely with the humanitarian crises of migrants displaced by environmental disasters or climate change.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

- Enforce and strengthen existing public health, environmental, and civil rights laws, including: the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts, legislation that covers Superfund clean-ups, exposure to toxic pesticides, the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), methane and mercury standards, legislation intended to protect farmworkers and domestic workers, and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.
- Ensure appropriate disaster relief and other federal funds and release them in a timely and legal manner without additional restrictions and barriers to access.



CLEAN ENERGY, WATER, AND OCEANS

- Promote the use of renewable power generation, energy efficiency, and enabling technologies.
- Support comprehensive federal legislation, policies, and regulations that move the U.S. towards utilizing 100 percent clean energy by 2050, such as the Green New Deal and the 100 Percent Clean Economy Act.
- Oppose efforts to weaken the Clean Water Act.
- Create employment opportunities by encouraging the training and participation of Latinos in the growing green energy sector.

CONSERVATION & PUBLIC LANDS

- Support policies to protect public lands, develop Latino conservation leadership, and protect and share Latino history in national monuments and protected areas.
- Support efforts to improve wildlife management and critical habitats across federal and state agencies, including defending and strengthening the Endangered Species Act and improving wildlife corridors, including those along the southern border.
- Oppose efforts to privatize or develop public lands in ways that harm Indigenous communities and communities of color, and oppose all efforts to advance oil and gas drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and other sensitive areas.
- Continue to support full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and oppose all efforts to undermine the Antiquities Act.
- Support federal agency policies and funding to ensure frontline communities of color are prioritized for coastal resilience projects, and support programs that promote coastal access, recreation, and education for low-income communities and communities of color.
- Support moratoriums on offshore drilling and legislation heavily curbing plastic production.

CLEAN ENERGY TRANSITION

- Support deep investments in post-secondary and continuing education resources, and worker training programs ensuring access to skilled jobs in emerging and transforming economies.
- Invest heavily in STEM programs at HSIs and workforce transition programs.



ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

We are facing an existential climate emergency that, if not sufficiently and urgently addressed, could seal the devastating fate of our planet and our families. Latinos recognize this challenge and are more willing to get involved politically with environmental issues than any other group.⁹⁰ The majority of U.S. Latinos live in areas that have experienced devastating impacts of extreme weather events, such as Hurricanes Irma and Maria in Puerto Rico, longer and stronger wildfires in California, flooding from sea level rise in Florida, and historic drought and heatwaves in Texas, all of which have had deadly impacts on these communities. Changes in climate and extreme weather are hitting our communities hard and magnifying the existing vulnerabilities that many Latinos already face, such as environmental degradation and the poisoning of our land, air, water, and food, leading to disproportionate exposure to toxins, pollutants, and environmental hazards at home and in the workplace. Addressing the climate crisis

and other environmental issues will require a transformation and significant investment in the U.S. workforce and economies at the national, state, and local levels.

Race and poverty are some of the strongest predictors of environmental degradation in communities such as lack of access to clean water and sanitation⁹¹ and violations of air quality standards.⁹² Close to 2 million Latinos live within a half-mile of an oil and gas facility, close enough to have concerns about the health impacts of pollution.⁹³ Asthma has a disproportionate impact on Latino families living in communities with poor air quality. For example, Latino children are twice as likely to die of asthma than non-Latino Whites. Poor air quality results in 750,000 summertime asthma attacks in children and 500,000 missed school days. Among Latinx adults, this pollution results in 2,000 asthma-related emergency room visits, 600 hospital admissions, and 1.5 million reduced activity days.⁹⁴

ENVIRONMENT AND GENDER

The World Health Organization found that natural disasters such as droughts, floods, and storms kill more women than men, and tend to kill women at a younger age. The gender-gap effects on life expectancy tend to be greater in more severe disasters, and in places where the socioeconomic status of women is particularly low.⁹⁵ We know that in the U.S., Latinas are vulnerable because they face social, economic, and political barriers

that further limit their coping capacity. As NHLA member organizations' research has shown, Latinas are the most vulnerable of all groups at the workplace, and the situation is even worse for undocumented Latinas. Thus, in the policymaking response to environmental challenges, it is important to include gender-sensitive strategies.

CLIMATE CRISIS EMERGENCY

In 2018, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 1.5°C Special Report concluded that if the global temperature rises by 1.5°C, humans will face unprecedented climate-related risks and weather events. It warns that action must be taken to lower global net human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) by about 45 percent from 2010 levels by 2030, reaching net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.⁹⁶

Climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, including hurricanes, wildfires, droughts, floods, and extreme heat days. Communities of color are on the frontlines of the environmental and public health impacts of climate change. We must ensure that climate solutions address these inequities and provide justice for these communities.

Climate-related migration across the world is increasing as a result of food insecurity caused by environmental changes and climate-induced disruptions, including weather-related disasters, drought, famine, and rising sea levels. According to the UN International Organization for Migration, by 2050, there may be as many as 200 million climate-displaced persons.⁹⁷ Climate-forced migrants and other environmental migrants⁹⁸ face additional risks during their journey and after they arrive at their destination. Many migrants are exposed to trauma, violence, and unhealthy conditions in their country of origin, along their migration journey, and in their new country of residence. Environmental migrants often lack formal protections under U.S. or international law. While the effects of climate change can aggravate societal tensions that lead to persecution, many climate-displaced persons do not yet meet the definition of a refugee under international or domestic law.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

COMPREHENSIVE CLIMATE ACTION

- Implement comprehensive climate policies and legislation to reduce Carbon Emission to meet recommendations of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 1.5°C Special Report to combat the climate crisis to ensure a safe, healthy, and prosperous future.
- Ensure comprehensive climate policies and legislation maximizes co-benefits, such as green jobs and reduced air pollution.
- Recommit United States participation and leadership in international efforts to address climate change such as the COP 21 Paris Climate Agreement and ratify such participation by Congress.

BUILDING CLIMATE PREPARED & RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

- Engage Latinos meaningfully through multiple public hearings in impacted communities and public comment periods of an average of 60 days that are accessible in multiple languages, on the implementation of environmental laws including those meant to address disproportionate impacts on communities of color and low-income communities.
- Expand research identifying preventative measures that address impacts (e.g. health, economic, safety, etc) that climate change will have on vulnerable populations, including elderly, children, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, women, people experiencing homelessness, and workers.
- Expand research on transitioning and building ethical and transparent governments that are climate prepared, climate-resilient, and advance equity and justice for vulnerable communities.
- Support and develop policies and programs

that provide financial investments to create climate-resilient communities (e.g. infrastructure replacement and hardening, water resource management plans, clean energy technology, and workforce training).

DISASTER RELIEF AND PUERTO RICO

- Appropriate disaster relief and other federal funds and release them in a timely and legal manner without additional restrictions and barriers to access, which are not required of other post-disaster entities.
- Align all federal, local, and private investments and plans to support the achievement of the government's 100 percent renewable portfolio standard by 2050.
- Enable all affected persons to access emergency services, food, and shelter following natural disasters, regardless of immigration status.
- Ensure mitigation dollars and planning are undertaken with the full input of affected communities; displacement and disruption of historic communities should be the last alternative.
- Bolster Puerto Rico's agriculture sector and promote resilient and sustainable local food production, and access to safe, potable water.
- Prohibit waivers of any civil, human, or environmental rights in the name of speed or greed. Rebuilding and recovery in Puerto Rico should not be an excuse for exploitation or displacement.
- Prioritize mitigation before displacement in the recovery and rebuilding process. All communities should receive equitable and just access to resources and treatment, regardless of income, property value, location, or other qualifiers.

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CLIMATE-RELATED MIGRATION

- Immediately establish a safe and hygienic process for climate-related migrants to enter the country and process their immigration status, in consideration of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Support the U.S. as an active leader in international discussions to support and find solutions for the Global Climate Change Resilience Strategy that would include global protections for climate-forced and other environmental pressured migration.
- Direct the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development to create and implement a new humanitarian program for international migrants who have been displaced by environmental disasters or climate change.
- Collect and maintain data on displacement caused by climate change and release an annual report with an analysis of the data.
- Support robust funding of the U.S. contribution to the Green Climate Fund (GCF), a fund designed to address the critical needs of developing nations, including Latin America, to foster resilience to the effects of climate change and to support low-carbon development.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

To ensure the health and well-being of Latino communities across the nation we must understand the current environmental inequities experienced by these communities, the impacts on their health, and promote policies that elevate and center environmental justice (EJ) for communities.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Halt waivers of environmental pollution laws that have been allowed since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S.
- Require federal agencies to assess the impact of a proposed action on human health, environmental hazards, and access to outdoor spaces and recreational activities and produce a “community impacts report” on its findings for any action that could harm an EJ community.
- Strengthen and support the enforcement of existing public health and environmental laws, including: the Clean Air Act; Clean Water Act; Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (Superfund); Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA); Coal Ash Regulations; National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); Methane Pollution Reduction Standards; Mercury and Air Toxic Standards (MATS); and the Resources Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA).
- Support the update of the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), a dysfunctional, 40-year-old chemical safety law that has failed to stop toxic chemicals from regularly being used in common household products.
- Enact the Environmental Justice for All Act to codify the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council and the directives of Presidential Executive Order 12898 on environmental justice and to strengthen and

enforce environmental and civil rights laws, such as Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

- Require federal agencies to consider the cumulative impacts (or pollutant levels) in permitting decisions under environmental laws such as the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts.
- Require federal agencies to develop, implement, and report activities in a manner that does not have a discriminatory impact on environmental justice communities.
- Establish an environmental justice

ombudsman role within the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to receive, review, and process complaints and allegations relating to environmental justice programs or actions of the EPA.

- Increase funding and strengthen authorizing language for environmental justice grant programs that support research, education outreach, development, and implementation of projects to address environmental and public health issues in EJ communities.

CLEAN ENERGY

To meet the carbon emissions reduction necessary to address the climate crisis, we must reduce our nation's and communities' dependency on fossil fuels, non-renewable and finite resources, including natural gas, that are the main drivers of climate change. We must ensure a just transition to a clean energy economy and way of life for the sustainability of our planet and future generations.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support legislation which would prohibit electricity shutoffs, mandate reconnections, and ensure electricity affordability protections for low-income households during the COVID-19 national emergency and beyond.
- Promote the use of renewable power generation and enabling technologies (e.g. battery storage), energy efficiency in buildings, and zero-emission engines across all sectors.
- Support comprehensive federal legislation, policies, and regulations that move the U.S. towards utilizing 100 percent clean energy, such as the Green New Deal and 100 percent Clean Economy Act by 2050.
- Support the establishment of a National Renewable Electricity Standard that requires retail electricity providers to increase their supply of renewable energy by a percentage of total retail sales each year.
- Prioritize policies, programs, and regulations that remove polluting energy facilities from communities of color and increase access to clean energy sources — such as solar, wind, geothermal — for all Americans, particularly frontline and low-income Black, Indigenous, Latino, Asian, and multiracial communities.
- Promote policies and programs that provide financial assistance for commercial and residential building energy efficiency retrofits, including the adoption of clean energy technologies (e.g. solar panels and battery storage) and retrofits that improve indoor air quality, prioritizing frontline and low-income Black, Indigenous, Latino, Asian and multiracial communities.

CLEAN WATER

In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly recognized the human right to water and sanitation and acknowledged that clean drinking water and sanitation are essential to the realization of all human rights.⁹⁹ Yet, many Latino communities across this country are faced with devastating water quality conditions including unsafe drinking water contaminated with lead, coal ash and PFAS and other toxics, inadequate wastewater

treatment infrastructure, unregulated and contaminated, and unaffordable water service. To ensure that all Latino communities have access to clean water in their homes and safe clean rivers, streams, and lakes, we must strengthen laws and regulations protecting water, improve enforcement of those laws, and greatly increase federal investment in sustainable water infrastructure.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Oppose efforts to weaken the Clean Water Act through legislation and deregulation of the Clean Water Rule of 2015.
- Support efforts to increase investment in water infrastructure, drinking water systems, wastewater systems, across the nation, prioritizing investment in frontline and low-income Black, Indigenous, Latino, Asian, and multiracial households and communities.
- Support efforts to create federal funding streams for repair and maintenance of aging decentralized wastewater systems, prioritizing vulnerable communities like Puerto Rico, Las Colonias,¹⁰⁰ rural African American communities, and the Navajo Nation.
- Support stronger implementation of water equity goals across EPA programs including programs focused on infrastructure upgrades for drinking water and wastewater utilities for low-income communities, such as removing cost-match requirements, adding grant payment programs, and forgiving loans to small and disadvantaged communities.
- Support the swift authorization and passage of federal funds for drinking water emergencies, such as communities facing lead contamination and support the use of federal grants by states for lead contamination abatement projects. Also support legislation increasing flexibility and accessibility of water-emergency related funding across federal agencies such as FEMA and EPA.
- Support legislation that would prohibit water shutoffs, mandate reconnections, and ensure water affordability protections for low-income households during the COVID-19 national emergency and beyond.



CONSERVATION

Communities benefit from the ecosystem services of well-balanced and protected natural landscapes. Latinx communities understand that it is critically important to protect our wildlife, public lands, and endangered species.

We must work to ensure that Latinx people see themselves represented in the histories and places protected, as well as have access to growing recreational and economic opportunities. Multiple barriers prevent Latinx communities from enjoying the benefits of

our public lands system. For example, Latinx people disproportionately live in areas that offer fewer park acres per person. Other barriers include access to transportation, cost of entry, cost of equipment, and unwelcoming social interactions.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

WILDLIFE

- Support efforts to improve wildlife management and critical habitat across federal and state agencies, including defending and strengthening the Endangered Species Act and improving wildlife corridors.
- Protect public lands by:
 - opposing and halting efforts to advance oil and gas drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and other sensitive areas; and
 - supporting efforts to reach net-zero emission of greenhouse gasses from public lands and waters and support the expansion of renewable energy infrastructure on public lands when possible.
- Ensure parks continue to exist for future generations by:
 - continuing to support full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF);
 - supporting efforts to provide funding

- to the Department of Interior to address the various maintenance backlog needs across the agency departments including U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and others;
- opposing all efforts to undermine or repeal the Antiquities Act, which gives the President the ability to establish new national monuments or enlarge existing monuments; and
- supporting efforts to re-establish and expand the boundaries of Bears Ears National Monument and Grand-Staircase Escalante National Monument to their original boundaries when first established.

INCREASE AND PROTECT ACCESS TO NATURE

- Oppose efforts to privatize public lands and attempts to mandate development on our public lands that could harm traditional and growing uses by Latinos.
- Designate and protect public lands as

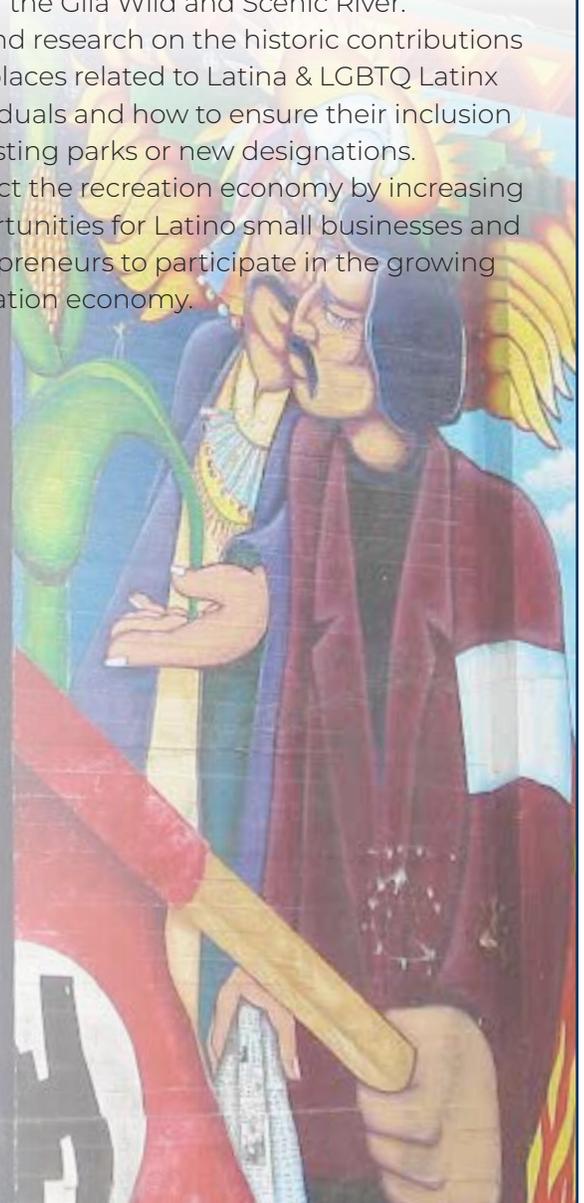
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national monuments in urban areas to increase access to public lands.

- Expand federal funding and programs to increase public transportation options to public lands for rural, urban and other under-represented communities, such as the Transit to Trails Act of 2019.
- Create a national outdoor equity fund, similar to that in the state of New Mexico, that would make available grants to assist local governments, organizations, and schools to increase access to outdoor experiences, environmental education, and more.
- designating the Gila and San Francisco Rivers and tributaries in New Mexico as the Gila Wild and Scenic River.
- Expand research on the historic contributions and places related to Latina & LGBTQ Latinx individuals and how to ensure their inclusion in existing parks or new designations.
- Protect the recreation economy by increasing opportunities for Latino small businesses and entrepreneurs to participate in the growing recreation economy.

PROTECTING LATINO HISTORY, CULTURE, AND PLACE

- Support efforts to identify, designate, and protect more places that tell the historical contributions, cultural connections to land, and places of environmental significance to Latinos within the national public lands system as national monuments, historic sites, national parks, and other designations. This should include:
 - establishing a Cesar Chavez National Historic Park to protect and commemorate the historic contributions of Cesar Chavez and other leaders of the United Farm Workers Movement;
 - designating the Chicano Park National Historic Landmark as an affiliated site of the National Park Service; and



OCEANS

Our oceans and coasts are our greatest shared resources, serving as important critical food sources, providing opportunities for social, economic, and cultural connections, as well as maintaining a rich ecosystem with incredible biodiversity. Coastal communities across the nation and U.S. territories depend heavily on marine-based economies, such as fisheries, tourism, and recreation.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Protect Ocean Ecosystems and Wildlife by:
 - supporting federal agency policies and funding ensuring that frontline communities of color are prioritized for coastal resilience projects;
 - opposing efforts to undermine or roll back existing marine monuments, marine protected areas, and marine sanctuaries;
 - supporting efforts to protect 30 percent of the ocean by 2030 by establishing new marine monuments, protected areas, and sanctuaries; and
 - supporting federal programs that promote coastal access, recreation, and education for low-income and communities of color.
- Protect sustainable fisheries by:
 - supporting policies promoting sustainable fisheries management and involvement of coastal, low-income, and minority community members in fisheries training, construction, and management; and
 - supporting the modernization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to account for existing and future climate change impacts on fisheries and ocean health.
- Enact an offshore drill ban which should include a permanent moratorium of offshore drilling in the eastern Gulf of Mexico and a banning of offshore drilling along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts.
- Tackle the Plastic Pollution Crisis by:
 - supporting legislation heavily curbing plastic production, incentivizing responsible recycling and disposal of existing plastics products, creating enforcement framework for holding polluting companies accountable for excess plastic production; and
 - supporting legislation providing funding to local organizations working with frontline community members who have been harmed by pollution from nearby plastics refineries.

CLEAN ENERGY TRANSITION

A just transition to a clean energy economy depends on ensuring that the 1.5 million people in the fossil fuel workforce have an opportunity to access training and new jobs in the burgeoning clean energy economy,

which already employs 3.26 million people in the U.S.¹⁰¹ Three states with the highest Latino populations are already leading on clean energy job creation: California, Texas, and Florida.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support federal investment in worker training programs to provide workers in fossil fuel related industries with training to enter new fields — whether in clean energy or other areas where their skills may be transferable.
- Support federal investment in programs at institutions of secondary education, higher education, and trade to prepare the incoming workforce with the skills and education to be successful in transitional and emerging job opportunities.
- Fund free childcare facilities at institutions of secondary education, higher education, and trade to enable Latino parents to more easily access education and training.
- Invest heavily in HSIs, and promote programs like Green Entrepreneurship, Clean Energy Technology, and workforce transition programs, particularly in STEM careers where Latinos are largely underrepresented.
- Require employers to provide paid family and parental leave regardless of gender, equal pay by race and gender, and healthcare benefits.
- Expand community-supported free high-speed internet access in low-income communities to support online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and after.

FARMWORKER PROTECTION

Latinos account for 83 percent of agricultural field occupations that expose workers to health hazards, bad air quality, and economic impacts of extreme weather. The changing climate and environmental conditions across the nation are an ever-growing threat to the agricultural industry causing severe damage to crops and workers. Climate change is leading to longer periods of droughts, more intense wildfires and more extreme heat days, exposing farmworkers to public health risks. Wildfire smoke remains in the air for an extended time, carrying toxic chemicals and causing dangerous air quality conditions harmful to those without proper respiratory protection. In efforts to quickly get crops off fields during or after a wildfire, farmworkers are often expected to put their health at risk by continuing to work outside in smoky conditions.

Additionally, heat-related illnesses, given rising temperatures, are becoming increasingly prevalent and dangerous amongst Latino workers in jobs that require physical labor outside during excessive heat, such as agricultural

work, construction work, and landscaping. Many workers may not want to ask for or take a break if they start to exhibit symptoms of heat illness. Workers may also fear discrimination or retaliation from their employer for speaking up against unsafe work conditions. Without protection from excessive heat exposure, workers are susceptible to severe health issues and even death.

The Trump administration proposed to cut farmworker pay at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to help the agriculture industry. This is the opposite of what farmworkers - and the country - need at this dire moment. Farmworkers are essential employees during the COVID-19 pandemic, and our food system is relying on farmworker health and safety to be prioritized during this time. More than half of all farmworkers lack health insurance,¹⁰² and many migrant farmworkers lack access to consistent care from the same provider as a result of frequent relocation. Protecting farmworker pay and access to healthcare are critical to the safety and stability of our country.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enact the Farmworker Smoke Protection Act of 2019, directing OSHA to develop and publish an official standard to protect employees affected by exposure to wildfire smoke.
- Enact the Asuncion Valdivia Heat Illness and Fatality Prevention Act of 2019 (named for a farmworker who tragically died from heatstroke), which would require OSHA to issue a federal standard for heat stress protections with meaningful participation of covered employees and tailored to the specific hazards of the workplace.
- Protect farmworker pay, provide free healthcare for all farmworkers, and increase funding to rural health clinics.
- Develop COVID-19 prevention protocols and guidance for farms and farmworkers.
- Provide the Department of Labor with increased funding for occupational safety enforcement in agriculture and end the denial of funding for enforcement on smaller farms.

PESTICIDES

Farmworkers, the majority of whom are Latino, have one of the highest rates of chemical exposures among U.S. workers. The EPA estimates that up to 3,000 farmworkers suffer acute pesticide poisoning every year through occupational exposures.¹⁰³ The numbers are likely much higher. Several factors contribute to the underestimation of the problem, including the inability and reluctance of injured workers to get medical

care, medical misdiagnosis, and the absence of a coordinated national pesticide incident reporting system. Agricultural workers and their families suffer serious short- and long-term health effects from pesticide exposure. Yet, despite the urgent need to protect farmworkers and their families from pesticide exposure, they are afforded fewer protections than workers exposed to chemicals in other industrial sectors.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure that the EPA fully implements and adequately enforces the recently revised Worker Protection Standard (WPS) to protect agricultural communities and the public from unreasonable harm from pesticides.
- Support stronger standards for workplace safety for farmworkers, including the banning of extremely toxic pesticides, such as chlorpyrifos, and stronger precautions against exposure.
- Support a federal policy mandating the reporting of pesticide use and illness incidents to inform regulations that support public health including pesticide use reform.