



**California League of  
Conservation Voters  
EDUCATION FUND**

**Candidate Briefing Digital Packet**  
Addressing the Climate Crisis

## Introduction

The climate crisis is here and now. Californians across the state are experiencing firsthand the consequences of climate inaction. In the past few months, we've seen record-breaking heat waves, rolling blackouts, unusual thunderstorms and lightning, hazardous air quality, and a record-breaking wildfire season which has scorched over four million acres. All of this amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the root cause of which is our extractive relationship with other species, habitat loss, and melting permafrost and glacial ice - all of which increase the risk of new infectious diseases and more pandemics. We must not accept this as the "new normal". Although California and the nation as a whole is ill-prepared for the next climate fueled emergency, we have time and we have the policy solutions. What we need now is the political will to implement those policies.

Voters understand the connection between these deadly events and the climate crisis, and they want solutions from candidates running for office that protect our environment. The climate crisis is not on hold because of the pandemic. Conversely, Californians' awareness of their environment has only increased, with quarantining and social distancing developing an even deeper appreciation for access to public lands, outdoor green spaces and parks, and clean air. We must work quickly to secure a healthy, clean and safe future not just for the next generations, but for every resident living in the state today.

We've put together this digital packet together to serve as a resource to provide you with tools on how to talk to voters about the climate crisis, with a focus on Californian constituents, informed by polling from the Public Policy Institute of California, Pew Research Center and some polling of our own. This packet will help you to understand what issues matter most to voters, as well as policy solutions you can champion. We're looking forward to working with you to implement meaningful change towards a healthy and safe future.

## About CLCVEF

Since 1972, the California League of Conservation Voters Education Fund (CLCVEF) has worked to protect and enhance the land, air, water, and health of all California communities.

CLCV Education Fund educates, engages and empowers California voters, advocates and elected officials to protect the state's natural resources and improve the health of its communities. Our strategy is four-fold:

1. Increase the impact and effectiveness of the environmental community through Green California, an initiative that coordinates activities and policy priorities for over 100 conservation and environmental organizations;
2. Support decision-maker education on the importance of environmental health and conservation issues in their region;
3. Connect voters with legislators to validate the importance of environmental health and conservation issues, especially in underserved communities and among nontraditional environmental allies; and

4. Conduct research on influential voter groups to better understand the pulse of California's electorate on environmental health and conservation issues.

We're excited to work with you on building an inclusive democracy and an equitable clean energy future where decisions about our economy, environment, and infrastructure are made by our communities.

## CLCVEF Staff Contacts

Consider us a resource and reach out to us when you have questions or need support.

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## **Natural Resources, Public Lands, and Adaptation**

**The issue:** In addition to reducing emissions and drawing down carbon, the United States must also increase its resilience and adaptation, focusing on disadvantaged communities most impacted by the harmful impacts of climate change. We must prepare communities to withstand more severe drought and flooding seasons, shrinking snowpack, volatile precipitation patterns, higher temperatures and sea level rise which will continue to put pressure on drinking water resources.

Due to climate change, years of drought, suppression of ecosystem's natural fire regimes and traditional indigenous burning practices, the scale and intensity of wildfires across the West increase every year. President Trump has blamed poor forest management for California's fires despite the fact that the federal government owns about 58% of forest lands while the state only owns about 3%, the rest being owned by private individuals, companies, or native tribes. The devastating effects of wildfires will continue to impact the state at greater cost – both to structures and wildlands, as well as human lives. The need for better forest management practices, restoration of native landscapes, and investment in reforestation and urban greenspace will be critical to mitigating future damage to communities while making them healthier and more resilient.

Public Lands management provides an incredible opportunity given the US already holds nearly 27% of all lands in trust for the American People. However, currently these lands continue to be sources of extraction and exploitation rather than investments in climate change mitigation. Even worse, many companies extract from these lands at the public's expense. Because laws governing mining of metals and other minerals on U.S. public lands haven't been updated in almost 150 years, foreign-owned mining companies are receiving taxpayer-owned resources for free. To increase the resiliency of our Country and fund the swift transition away from extraction, these policies and degenerative practices cannot continue.

**Solutions:** Expand and protect public lands and state parks that act as natural buffers and carbon sinks across the state, including the California landscapes within H.R. 2546, the Protecting America's Wilderness Act. Discontinue issuance of any permits for mining and resources extraction on public land, and make industries profiting off these resources pay their fair share. Promote land, forest, water and wetlands management practices that improve soil health, reduce fuels for fire, sequester carbon, protect water resources, and elevate indigenous

communities and their practices in sustainable land management. Advance urban forestry and maintenance plans that reduce the heat island effect and improve public health. Restore native ecosystems that act as buffers for resident communities, particularly in fire-prone areas and along coastlines susceptible to sea level rise, and promote biodiversity.

The federal government recently passed the Great American Outdoors Act that permanently provides \$900 million per year to the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which has been used to support 40,000 state and local parks in California over the life of the program, and added \$9.5 billion to address the national parks maintenance backlog. This is a strong step, which can be expanded by supporting the international 30 x 30 campaign to protect 30% of public lands and marine areas by 2030. (More details on the Great American Outdoors Act can be found [HERE](#)).

**Polling:** Democrats, Republicans, and independents are unified in wanting elected officials that will protect our parks and public lands. Ninety-two (92) percent of respondents indicate they are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports protecting public land and parks.

The vast majority of Americans do not support development on Federal Public Lands, noting specific policies like the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, which prohibits road construction and timber harvesting on nearly 60 million acres of National Forest System Lands. Overall, three out of four respondents (75%) said they support the Roadless Rule, while only 16% oppose it. Interestingly, those in rural areas are just as likely to support the policy as those in non-rural areas (77% vs. 75%, respectively). Respondents' geographic region had little impact on their support for (or opposition to) the policy.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> US Public Lands Roadless Rule Survey Memo, Pew Charitable Trusts, March 2019. <https://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/assets/2019/03/pew-charitable-trusts---us-public-lands-survey-2019---memo-v4.pdf>



## **Clean Energy Economy**

**The issue:** Elimination of fossil fuel dependence for energy needs is necessary to avoid the worst consequences of climate change. Unfortunately, the nation still heavily relies on fossil fuels and natural gas for energy generation. Although there is significant room for progress, California is leading with 32% of its energy deriving from renewable sources. Meanwhile, renewable energy only accounts for approximately 17% of electricity generation nationwide. Continued reliance on fossil fuels for energy use is expensive, toxic to communities living near extraction and processing facilities, and will further exacerbate climate fueled disasters such as wildfires, extreme heat, and drought – costly and deadly consequences of inaction on climate change.

**Solutions:** The United States must rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement and set standards and commitments that go beyond the accord. As a nation, we must heavily invest public and private dollars into transforming our infrastructure to achieve 100% clean, renewable, and zero-emission energy. The cost of inaction is far greater, with natural disasters costing the country over \$535 billion in just the last 5 years. Building a clean energy economy presents tremendous opportunity for economic growth, jobs, public health, and the environment. The country must accelerate the transition to renewable sources of energy and away from our reliance on fossil fuels. This can be accomplished by banning further drilling or fracking permits and phasing out existing production, transforming our energy grid to rely on renewables, increasing energy storage capacity, and electrifying buildings and the transportation sector. Doing so enables us to meet the energy needs of the future through 100% clean energy while supporting good paying, family-sustaining union jobs.

### **Polling:**

There is widespread support for a clean energy economy. With no additional details or arguments, voters' reaction is overwhelmingly positive to prioritizing a clean energy economy. Overall, 79% say they are supportive with only 21% opposed. In the extremes, 50% strongly support the concept while only 10% are strongly opposed—an overwhelming 5-to-1 ratio. There is also very high support across parties for candidates that refuse to take oil and gas money.



## **Transportation & Land Use**

**The issue:** Transportation is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in California, accounting for over 41% of emissions in California. In 2018, it accounted for over 28% of the nation's total emissions. The Trump administration's rollbacks and weakening of stricter tailpipe and Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards and his administration's attacks on California's authority to institute stricter state standards for fuel efficiency have set us back. In California, vehicles and trucks remain a stubborn obstacle to achieving carbon zero goals, as well as a dangerous source of poor air quality. California's air pollution is the some of the worst in the nation, with over half of the top ten<sup>2</sup>. Although, the state has seen progress on this issue, most notably Governor Newsom's recent executive order which sets a goal for the state that all new passenger cars and trucks sold after 2035 be zero-emission and a goal for medium and heavy-duty trucks to be zero emission after 2045.<sup>3</sup>

Entrenched land use patterns and practices are one of the main barriers to cutting emissions and providing Californians with a healthier more sustainable environment. The long history of designing for vehicles, expanding urban sprawl, and prioritizing development on undeveloped land over infill development runs contrary to the direction needed to mitigate climate change and increase public health and wellness. Earlier this year, the Trump administration introduced rollbacks to NEPA that would end thorough environmental review of new construction, as well as gut requirements that a proposed project's cumulative and indirect impacts be evaluated before approval.

**Solutions:** Investing heavily in public transit and active transportation (i.e. pedestrian and bike infrastructure). Accelerate the transition to zero emission vehicles and expand charging infrastructure. Support sustainable, equitable and green development that maximizes energy and water efficiency, prioritizes infill development, utilizes green infrastructure such as cool pavement and green space that enhances safety and quality of life, and maximizes accessibility to public transit and mobility to jobs and essential services. Protect and strengthen the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to protect public health and the environment.

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<sup>2</sup> Sacramento Bee, "These California cities are among the worst for air pollution in the US," April 21, 2020 <https://www.sacbee.com/news/california/article242169741.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Executive Order N-79-20 <https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/9.23.20-EO-N-79-20-text.pdf>

**Polling:**

Californians overwhelmingly rate traffic as a problem and support funding to improve transportation infrastructure. The majority of Californians (62%) support requiring local governments to change zoning for new development from single-family to multi-family housing near transit and job centers.<sup>4</sup> And 76% favor encouraging local governments to change land use and transportation planning so that people could drive less.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Public Policy Institute of CA, 2019. <https://www.ppic.org/press-release/opposed-to-trump-split-on-what-they-prefer-in-a-candidate/>.

<sup>5</sup> Public Policy Institute of CA, Californians and the Environment, 2020. <https://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/ppic-statewide-survey-californians-and-the-environment-july-2020.pdf>





## **Toxics & Pollution**

**The issue:** In addition to significant environmental harm, fossil fuel extraction and refining, along with the petrochemical industry have costly and deadly impacts on citizens living near or working within these industries, most of whom are low-income and communities of color. The vast majority of these sites do not have safety buffer zones around the facilities, and again and again, industry has failed to perform adequate clean-up of decommissioned sites, leading to problems around groundwater contamination, harmful air quality, and public exposure to toxic chemicals. Waste pollution, particularly plastic and petroleum-based products, is a growing concern due to its harmful impact on landfill capacity, wildlife, waterways and the coastline.

The impacts of these pollutants are heavily disproportionate, and the burden typically falls most heavily on lower-income communities of color who are often not provided the resources they need by the government to adequately fix the problem. For example, in Richmond, CA, where most residents are low-income communities of color, the Chevron refinery causes children living in the city to suffer roughly twice the rate of asthma as their neighbors countywide.<sup>6</sup> In Los Angeles, it is predominantly working-class Latinos living exposed to dangerous levels of lead in their gardens and homes, their neighborhoods subject to the largest lead cleanup in state history.<sup>7</sup> And nationwide, Black and Hispanic communities also suffer disproportionately from air pollution.<sup>8</sup> People must be protected from toxic ingredients linked to cancer, birth defects, reproductive harm and other major health concerns that can be found in food, water and other everyday products.

Unfortunately, rather than strengthening protections, the EPA has continuously been rolling back regulations and enforcement, most recently in March 2020 when the administration announced it would waive enforcement on numerous regulations aimed at protecting environmental and public health.

**Solutions:** We must lead on standards protect consumers and residents from pollutants that undermine our health and impact our ecosystems. Strengthen the EPA regulations and ensure robust enforcement of environmental protections. Hold polluters accountable, clean up hazardous sites, reduce waste, and improve consumer protections from toxic substances to

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/oct/09/richmond-chevron-california-city-polluter-fossil-fuel>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-exide-cleanup-20180426-story.html>

<sup>8</sup> University of Minnesota, March 2019. <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/03/190311152735.htm>

reduce environmental pollution and to protect communities from toxic exposure, especially those who are most disproportionately impacted by environmental hazards.

**Polling:**

The majority of Californians express serious concern about air pollution and access to safe drinking water, with higher concern among Black, Latinx, and Asian-Americans communities.<sup>9</sup> Californians love their oceans and waterways and overwhelmingly support policies to keep them clean and free of pollution. Sixty-four percent believe plastics and marine debris is a “big problem” on our coasts and 61% rate the condition of CA oceans and beaches as “very important” to California’s economy and quality of life for its residents. The majority (73%) also oppose off-shore drilling.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Public Policy Institute of CA, Californians and the Environment, 2020. <https://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/ppic-statewide-survey-californians-and-the-environment-july-2020.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Public Policy Institute of CA, Californians and the Environment, 2020. <https://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/ppic-statewide-survey-californians-and-the-environment-july-2020.pdf>



## **Agriculture**

**The issue:** Over 24 million acres of California's land is dedicated to farming and ranching (nearly a quarter of California's total land mass).<sup>11</sup> For the entire nation, recent estimates show farmland accounting a little over 900 million acres, nearly 40% of the nation's total acreage. In addition, data shows that while the total number of farms is falling, the average size of each farm has increased.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, in California and across the country, despite its significant potential to be otherwise, agriculture is a net-emitter of greenhouse gases. And recent data demonstrates that emissions from agriculture are actually increasing, confirming the unfortunate trend that industrial scale production for crops and animals have disproportionately larger carbon footprints.<sup>13</sup> Nationwide, the amount of factory farms has significantly increased and caused methane emissions from animal agriculture to rise over 14% from 1990 levels. Factory farms pose significant risk of contamination of water resources due to runoff while also being an extremely water intensive industry. The increased use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides have harmful effects on farmworkers, water quality, and wildlife while also contributing to toxic nitrous oxide and carbon dioxide emissions.

The agricultural industry also stands to lose in the climate crisis. For California, a changing climate means more extreme weather events, extended periods of drought, less days of frost and more days of extreme heat. The types of products grown and raised in the state may change over time due to the climate no longer being viable for certain crops or animals. Climate change also brings new pests and pathogens that can devastate crops and livestock as well as spread new diseases. Farming is an essential industry that has the potential to be a solution to the climate crisis, but for far too long the federal government has incentivized the exact types of industrial agriculture that are contributing to greenhouse gas emissions.

**Solutions:** Reduce or eliminate federal subsidies for agricultural industries who pollute and instead promote climate smart agricultural practices that improve air quality, improve soil health, sequester carbon, and reduce the need for toxic pesticides and fertilizers. Transition the agricultural industry to be carbon neutral by building a more regenerative, sustainable food system that sequesters carbon and actually fights climate change. Develop programs that incentivize smaller-scale sustainable farming and land practices. Develop and enforce robust

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<sup>11</sup> California Agricultural Statistics Review, CA Dept. Of Food and Agriculture, 2018-2019.  
<https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/statistics/PDFs/2018-2019AgReportnass.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> United States Department of Agriculture, Census on Agriculture: Farms and Farmland, 2017.  
[https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Highlights/2019/2017Census\\_Farms\\_Farmland.pdf](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Highlights/2019/2017Census_Farms_Farmland.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, March 2019.

<https://www.iatp.org/blog/201904/latest-agriculture-emissions-data-show-rise-factory-farms>

water management plans that conserve water, prioritize residents, and protect water quality. Address the disparities in access to healthy food by supporting programs and funding for urban farms, community food pantries and kitchens, consumer education and programs that bring farmers markets, supermarkets, co-ops and healthy corner stores to areas that are underserved.

**Polling:**

Efforts to encourage carbon sequestration (also called carbon capture) are one of the least controversial methods to address climate change and are favored by wide majorities across party lines. Nationally, 84% of Americans agree the government should provide tax credits for businesses to develop carbon capture practices.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Pew Research Center, "Two Thirds of Americans Think the Government Should Do More on Climate" June 23, 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/science/2020/06/23/two-thirds-of-americans-think-government-should-do-more-on-climate/>



## **Workforce Transition**

**The issue:** While rapid decarbonization is needed to stave off the worst impacts of climate change, doing so will impose economic hardship on communities and workers dependent upon fossil fuel extraction and use. Identifying and mitigating the negative economic consequences of decarbonization, often referred to as “just transition,” facilitates an equitable transition to a green economy that provides good-paying union jobs.

**Solutions:** The Covid-19 pandemic and resulting economic fallout have resulted in millions of US citizens losing employment, including notable job loss within the fossil fuel industry. Green jobs programs are unique in their integration of economy, equity and environment. A silver-lining in the economic fallout resulting from the pandemic is California’s opportunity to design programs that put people back to work in jobs that advance the transition to clean energy, and provide better pay and more economic opportunity to workers. A focus on fossil-fuel industry workers can accelerate a just transition through green jobs training and apprenticeship programs, including zero-emissions vehicles manufacturing, green energy infrastructure, and electrification retrofits.

### **Pertinent Federal Legislation up for Consideration:**

[HR 5986](#): Environmental Justice for All Act would establish a Federal Energy Transition Economic Development Assistance Fund using revenues from new fees on the oil, gas, and coal industries to support communities and workers as they transition away from greenhouse gas-dependent economies. A fact sheet for the legislation can be found [HERE](#).

### **Polling:**

The majority of Californians believe that transitioning to a green economy will either create more jobs (39%) or will not change the number of jobs available to residents (30%). Less than a third believe actions to reduce global warming would decrease jobs in the state. Californians also support investing more heavily in communities most impacted by climate change, with 78% percent say it is important for some of the state’s cap-and-trade funds to be spent on environmental improvements in lower-income communities.<sup>3</sup>



## **Building Democracy**

**The issue:** The majority of Californians support policies to mitigate climate change and advance a green economy, but too often voters feel disempowered and disengaged in the political process, and their voices are drowned out by more monied and influential corporate interests. It is critical that the state uphold and improve democratic functions that increase transparency and accountability to voters and prioritize citizens' voices over corporate interests. With the current public health crisis, it is also critical all Californians can access voting easily and safely.

**Solutions:** Expand access to voting through election reform policies and increase transparency and accountability in campaign finance laws in order to dramatically expand the electorate and ensure that our government is representative of the people of California. Increase opportunities for voters to obtain education and information on candidates and propositions on the ballot. In 2019, the House passed but the Senate did not hear H.R. 1 the For The People Act that among its many provisions made it easier to vote by mail, made it a crime to mislead voters, helped register younger voters, and added transparency with meetings and political contributions. These are steps that are critical to protecting and expanding democracy.

### **Polling:**

California voters report heightened concern about the voting process alongside heightened awareness and engagement with this year's election process. Nearly 94% of registered voters in the state indicate they plan to vote, and 74% indicate they plan to vote early.<sup>15</sup> Deciding which way to vote is a larger barrier to access than interest, with voters citing challenges to understanding what propositions and candidates to vote for on the ballot.

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<sup>15</sup> EMC Research Memo for CLCVEF re CA Voting in 2020. See memo in reference materials attached with this packet.