

THE GREENLINING INSTITUTE

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To: Green Assets Working Group

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RE: The Opportunity of Our Generation: AB32 and Economic Empowerment

California Takes the Lead

The *Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006*, or AB 32, authored by Assemblywoman Pavley and Assembly Speaker Emeritus Núñez positioned California in par with the international community and as a national leader to combat climate change. This historic legislation sets the path to ensure a sustainable future by mandating the emission reduction of **greenhouse gasses** (GHG) to 1990 levels, roughly 30% of the current levels. “[S]ustainable solutions are not only possible and economically sustainable but essential for our survival.”¹ Greenlining sees massive potential in this global transformation to leverage investments and policy for disadvantaged communities into long-term asset and economic development. Our objective is to ensure all communities are leaders and decision makers in implementing California’s new renewable energy plan and a new green economy under AB 32. Our vision is to use this new and unique opportunity to ameliorate poverty in all communities.

What We Need to Know

AB 32 gave the California **Air Resource Board** (ARB) the power to decide our environmental future. ARB has a long history of regulating the Air Quality in California, and is viewed to be best suited to approach this challenge. ARB has assigned the California Action Team (CAT), (state agencies experts) to help shape the approach to reduce GHG. CAT has 12 subgroups, “...nine that address specific economic sectors and three that were formed to analyze broad issues related to implementing a multi-sector approach to **greenhouse gas** reduction efforts. The CAT subgroups include: Agriculture, Cement, Energy, Forest, Green Buildings, Land Use, Recycling and Waste Management, State Fleet, and Water-Energy.”² They in turn create regulations that ensure we holistically reduce GHG emissions. This will be an extraordinary challenge for industries mandated to meet AB32 emission’s reductions. It will also create numerous policies that provide the opportunity to transform our lifestyle into a sustainable one.

Our Time is Now

We must fundamentally shift our human activities because our global institutions of transportation, food production, and infrastructure are dependent on fossil fuels that are not sustainable. Sustainability is centered on our interconnectedness to all living things. It is the notion that we can ensure the survival of humanity through the use of clean, renewable, and unlimited resources (e.g., wind, ocean waves, water, solar power, etc.). Henceforth, AB 32 is a catalyst for change. It enables the modernization of California’s infrastructure, and the development of a clean atmosphere. “This . . . presents a magnificent opportunity to transform California’s economy into one that runs on clean and sustainable technologies, so that all Californian’s are able to enjoy their rights to clean air and water, and a healthy and safe environment ”³ upon which our health is so dependent.

1. e2, PBS documentary, <http://www.pbs.org/e2/about.html>.

2. The California Resource Board for the State of California, “Climate Change Draft Scoping Plan: A Framework for Change,” June 2008, <http://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/scopingplan/document/draftscopingplan.pdf>, 4.

3. The California Resource Board for the State of California, ES-1.

Bold and Communal Advancement

Underserved communities which are predominantly people of color contribute the least to global warming but are the ones that have carried the brunt of environmental racism/ classism, . . . “and [will be] the first to suffer from the impacts of global warming, air pollution, and the disposal of toxic waste.”⁴ If we do not bridge the economic, civil and environmental justice efforts, then we will face a new environmental divide that will prove detrimental to our communities. There is an informational divide that Greenlining intends to bridge in order to bring our communities into decision-making to responsibly protect our future. “The extreme global inequities and prevailing consumption patterns continue at the expense of the environment and peaceful co-existence. The choice is ours.”⁵

What We Intend to Do

Greenlining advocates for low-income and communities of color and builds bridges for sustainable planning between these communities, environmental justice and civil rights organizations, business owners, stakeholders and policy makers. We plan to be key players in the implementation of A.B 32, sitting at the table of decision making, not ‘on’ it. Our approach is pragmatic and holistic ensuring low-income and communities of color are not left out of the new green market and receive proper compensation for historical and contemporary environmental injustice.

Our overall goals are to:

1. Develop to a cleaner environment, especially in places where low-income and working class families are concentrated;
2. Improve the health of our communities by removing pollutants in the environment;
3. Ensure that we develop new economic models that build wealth, assets, and models of financial sustainability in underserved communities;
4. Entrusting that our communities are part of the new green economy as stakeholders and professionals with desirable, skilled, and well-paying green jobs; and
5. Work with the youth to become leaders in their lives and be productive stewards of our planet.

Only Together Can We Overcome

Global warming is a grave danger that could realistically cause our extinction. We must recognize the interconnectedness of all of us as a human species and return to Indigenous traditions of respect and balance for all living things—particularly the earth. These solutions are only successful when, like the roots of trees, they are born and well founded at the grassroots level. AB 32 will only succeed if our communities are invested in it. Our communities are the solution to the problem. Community leaders are in the best position to take the first step of educating our community in order to begin holding AB 32 accountable to the underserved. The effects of this process to become a green economy will determine the future of California for the next ten years and beyond. Help us craft a communal strategy to ensure that the workings of the local, state and national government represent the best interests of our communities. Ultimately, we must think long-term. We cannot afford to think in the short run.



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4. The Greenlining Institute, “The Green Solution for People of Color: How the Advent of Green Business Can Bring Together Two Movements,” Issue Brief, By Nonya Collier, Academy Fellow, July 2006, <http://www.greenlining.org/sections/view/documents?&limit=15&start=60>.

5. Wangari Maathai, 2004 Nobel Peace Laureate.