

Toxinformer

Environmental Health Coalition

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Environmental Health Coalition

Working for a Toxic-Free San Diego
1980-2003

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Environmental Health Coalition

Organizing for Justice

Environmental Health Coalition is dedicated to environmental and social justice. We believe that justice is achieved when empowered communities act together to make social change. We organize and advocate to protect public health and the environment threatened by toxic pollution. EHC supports efforts that create a just society which foster a healthy and sustainable quality of life.

The Border Environmental Justice Campaign (BEJC) works in solidarity with social justice groups in the border region to promote worker and community right-to-know about the chemicals used by the maquiladoras, to increase their capacity to influence conditions that directly affect their health, and to demand cleanup of abandoned and contaminated sites.



The Clean Bay Campaign (CBC) unites workers, bayside communities, and conservationists to clean up, restore and protect San Diego Bay as a clean and healthy multi-use water resource capable of supporting a diverse range of activities.

The Research and Community Assistance Program responds to the needs of residents by providing scientific, technical, and policy information and assistance, and empowering residents with appropriate and effective strategies.

The Toxic Free Neighborhoods Campaign (TFN) works with affected residents to promote land use and planning reforms, the relocation of hazardous industries to industrial zones, and the reduction of toxic air contaminants released by industry.



The Campaign to Eliminate Childhood Lead Poisoning (CeCLP) works with community residents, housing advocates, health officials, and government agencies to eliminate the sources of lead exposure in San Diego County.

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California Environmental Justice Groups Make History

Cal/EPA agencies endorse landmark environmental justice policies

Following an emotional day filled with public testimony from residents of environmental justice communities across the state, the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA) Advisory Committee on Environmental Justice on September 30 approved a far-reaching set of recommendations that will establish and implement environmental justice programs and policies for all Cal/EPA agencies.

More than 250 community residents representing many of the state's low-income communities and communities of color traveled to Oakland on September 29 to participate in this historic event. These communities suffer a disproportionate burden of toxics and pollution, and residents shared with the Advisory Committee personal stories of their struggles. They offered support for the Advisory Committee report's key recommendations and demanded that Cal/EPA take the needed steps to address California's environmental justice crisis.

Mobilizing for Justice

Lead by five leading environmental justice organizations—Asian Pacific Environmental Network (Oakland), Communities for a Better Environment (San Francisco Bay Area/ Los Angeles), Environmental Health Coalition (San Diego), People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights (San Francisco), and Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition/ Health and Environmental Justice Project (San Jose)—the representation of community residents in Oakland was extraordinary.

More than 40 EHC staff and community leaders from the San Diego-Tijuana region traveled to share their support for the recommendations, and joined other leaders for a rally at Preservation Park prior to the public hearing.

“Are the communities of wealthy families being exposed to contamination? No, because they don't live near industries and other places with toxic chemicals,”



Berta Ortiz, a member of the Toxic-Free Neighborhoods Community Action Team, tells the Cal/EPA Advisory Committee about environmental justice conditions in the Logan Area of San Diego. The Advisory Committee's recommendations call for the integration of environmental justice into all aspects of Cal/EPA.

Leticia Gallardo, a Promotora with EHC's Campaign to Eliminate Childhood Lead Poisoning, told the cheering crowd. “Today, we will make sure our voices are heard. We deserve protection without regard to our economic status or our origin. We are going to fight to make sure our communities are safe and sustainable. We will fight for the betterment of our children, who are our future.”

Carlos Porras, Director of Communities for a Better Environment, emphasized the importance of the testimony residents had prepared, and rallied participants for a march through the Oakland streets to the hearing.

“Industry people are trying to weaken these regulations as we speak,” Porras said. “We need to send them a message. Show them where the power is!”

Voices of Power

Propelled by chants demanding justice and equality, residents entered the Oakland state building in force, prepared to finally have their voices heard by agencies whose policies for decades have influenced life and death decisions for their communities. For more than eight hours, nearly 100 representatives from more than 50



Amelia Simpson, left, Director of EHC's Border Environmental Justice Campaign, and Verónica Cruz García, a member of Colectivo Chilpancingo Pro Justicia Ambiental, talk about how the Cal/EPA EJ guidelines will help protect communities on both sides of the U.S./Mexico border.

HISTORY, continued from Page 4

environmental justice, health, environmental, government and labor organizations testified in favor of the Advisory Committee recommendations. The stories they told shared the common theme of unfair and unjust environmental regulations based on race and income, and the suffering these regulations have led to.

“These communities have fought and struggled for too long against an environmental regulatory system that has degraded communities and the health of families,” Paula Forbis, Director of EHC’s Toxic-Free Neighborhoods Campaign told the assembled Advisory Committee members. “We need a system based on common sense, not dollars and cents. These recommendations will be a critical first step towards reforming that system.”

Landmark Policies

The Advisory Committee report calls for the integration of environmental justice into all aspects of Cal/EPA, the inclusion of meaningful public participation, the improvement of research and data collection, and the improvement of cross-media coordination and accountability between Cal/EPA agencies. These agencies include the California Air Resources Board, the Department of Pesticide Regulation, the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, the Department of Toxic Substances Control, the Integrated Waste Management Board, and the State Water Resources Control Board.

Diane Takvorian, Executive Director of Environmental Health Coalition and Co-Chair of the Advisory Committee, called the report historic.

“This is a huge step forward in our struggle for environmental justice,” Takvorian said.

California environmental justice alliance issues new report

Recommendations provide framework for environmental justice reform

A report released on September 17 by the Environmental Justice Working Group provides a clear landscape of environmental justice in California, and lays the groundwork for policy changes that can be accomplished, in part, through the adoption of the key recommendations from the Cal/EPA Advisory Committee on Environmental Justice.

Building Healthy Communities From the Ground Up is the result of discussions between environmental justice organizations in California to explore environmental conditions in the state’s most impacted communities, and develop policy recommendations to address these issues.

The five organizations – Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Communities for a Better Environment, Environmental Health Coalition, People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights, and

Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition/ Health and Environmental Justice Project – have struggled to achieve environmental justice in their own communities and have come to realize that policy change at the state level is a must.

The six major recommendation areas are as follows, with clear policy proposals in each:

- Address existing environmental risks and prevent future ones
- Ensure safe, decent, affordable housing
- Protect and ensure workers’ rights and safety
- Promote and ensure community-based land use planning and economic development
- Ensure that transportation planning, investments and operations support and strengthen communities; and
- Ensure safe, healthy schools and quality education

Building Healthy Communities is available for download in PDF format from the EHC Web site www.environmentalhealth.org or by contacting EHC at (619) 235-0281



Members of EHC's Youth LEAD Academy prepare posters for a rally held before the Cal/EPA Advisory Committee on Environmental Justice hearing. For more about the LEAD Academy please see the story on Page 6.

Using Common Sense – The Precautionary Approach

The Advisory Committee report recognizes the significant burden of toxics and pollution on impacted communities and pledges to use a precautionary approach to address them.

Cal/EPA has never used the precautionary approach. This approach to decision making means that regulations should prevent harm when there is credible evidence that harm is occurring, or is likely to occur – even when complete scientific evidence or proof is not available. The precautionary approach may replace risk-based decision, allowing officials to restrict polluter permits, require stringent clean-up, and impose strong emission reduction and control rules based on currently available scientific information.

Better Safe Than Sorry – Pollution Prevention

Consistent with the precautionary approach, the Advisory Committee prioritized pollution prevention over pollution control. All too frequently communities of color have been left feeling sorry by pollution control – sorry for their lost health and quality of life. This approach utilizes new technologies, non and less-toxic products,

and avoids clean-up and regulatory costs. The pollution prevention recommendation also calls for the establishment of an Office of Pollution Prevention to research new products, and assist regulators to require use of less toxic alternatives

Looking at the Whole Picture – Cumulative Impacts

The Advisory Committee recommendations also call for Cal/EPA agencies to evaluate the cumulative impact of toxics in an impacted community when making regulatory decisions. The process of evaluating cumulative impacts requires that the health effects of all sources of pollution be taken into consideration when determining the impact of pollution on individuals, communities and the environment. This practical approach will replace the chemical-by-chemical method, which underestimates pollution impacts by disregarding full information.

From Policies to Practices

The next step in the process for implementing these landmark environmental justice policies will require Secretary Hickox and Cal/EPA's Interagency Working Group to adopt specific procedures to implement the policies and guide the work of Cal/EPA's six agencies. The Working Group on October 14 approved a resolution made by Hickox that endorsed the report. Hickox said the report will be used a framework for agency-wide environmental justice strategies and set a date of December 31, 2003 to complete the strategies.

If left unchecked and unchallenged, the environmental justice crisis in California will continue to weaken the economic, social and overall health of all our communities. Meeting the challenge now is not only necessary, but also possible.

EHC will be working with other California environmental justice organizations and our key allies in Sacramento to ensure that Cal/EPA honors the demands of our impacted communities and moves forward with the implementation of these policies.

'We need a system based on common sense, not dollars and cents. These recommendations will be a critical first step towards reforming that system.'

~ Paula Forbis, EHC

LEAD Academy teaches youth skills for social and environmental justice organizing

Seated in the far corner of Nile Hall in Oakland's Preservation Park, a small group of teens is engaged in an activity that at first glance has all the markings of a high school art project. But with images of polluting power plants and slogans like "Power to the People, Not Pollution" and "Keep the 'Chula' in our Vista", the posters being created are nothing like your average class assignment. And the youth behind these messages are more than just kids from San Diego County in town for a fun Bay Area afternoon.

On September 29, nine youth activists joined EHC community leaders and staff in Oakland for a public hearing on new environmental justice guidelines developed by the California Environmental Protection Agency Advisory Committee on Environmental Justice. The youth participation in the hearing was a highlight of the inaugural EHC Youth Leadership, Advocacy, and Development (LEAD) Academy.

In preparation for the hearing, the youth were trained on key issues by EHC staff, and developed stories of environmental justice conditions in their communities, which they shared with the Advisory Committee in support of the guidelines. They also played a major role by bringing energy and creativity to the pre-hearing rally, creating posters and signs and leading EHC's contingent in a march through the streets of Oakland.

Irene Bueno, a senior at Chula Vista High School said her experience organizing with EHC and the LEAD Academy has given her skills that will help her have a voice in the decisions made in her community. "Working with EHC is a good opportunity to be involved in the community and be active, instead of just ignoring our problems," she said.

Expanding Youth Activism

As Environmental Health Coalition continues to grow and expand its campaigns for social and environmental



Christina Angeles, left, and Danelly Cruz pick up trash while Francis Go documents their work during the California Coastal Cleanup in September. The Coastal Cleanup is one of many activities in which EHC youth activists have participated.

justice, the role of San Diego County youth activists who want to make a positive change in their communities has also increased. The organization created the LEAD Academy in an effort to formally incorporate youth activism into EHC's activities.

Structured as a four-month training program for youth in leadership roles, the LEAD Academy expands on existing youth organizing around issues like the development of the Chula Vista Mid-Bayfront, and incorporates training about EHC's other key campaigns. The Academy, funded in part, by the Tides Foundation and The Intergroup Relations Project Fund of The San Diego Foundation, includes a more in-depth introduction to advocacy, focusing on contacting local, state, and national officials, and giving the participants real avenues to political access.

In the spirit of EHC's SALTA (Salud Ambiental, Latinas Tomando Acción) training model, the goal of the LEAD Academy is to give participants the skills to become peer educators and organizers with a commitment to taking action. The ten youth from EHC's Clean Bay Campaign and two from the Toxic-Free Neighborhoods Campaign are developing the necessary skills for a new generation of organizers.



Irene Bueno, left, pinpoints the location of her neighborhood on a map held by Maria Moya, Lead Organizer with EHC's Toxic-Free Neighborhood Campaign. The activity was part of the first session of the EHC LEAD Academy.

Clean Bay Campaign organizer Nohelia Ramos, who helped create the LEAD Academy and has been facilitating the training since September, said youth activists bring new energy and perspective to EHC's efforts.

"Our communities are heavily impacted by social and environmental injustices. The LEAD Academy offers real-world experience for youth who represent disenfranchised segments of our society – young women, young people of color, queer youth, and low-income youth – and empowers them with the skills and vision to fight for social and environmental justice," Ramos said.

Hands-on Activism

The LEAD Academy is far from a classroom-based training. Youth are not segregated from the regular EHC Community Action Teams and have participated in activities like the Cal/EPA hearing, organizing for sustainable

development of the Mid-Bayfront, and participating in the annual California Coastal Cleanup. Including the youth in regular EHC activities has given them the opportunity to learn first-hand from more experienced organizers.

"The youth are incorporated into our regular community meeting schedule, and are fully integrated into our program," said CBC Director Laura Hunter. "They are making a huge impact on the Mid-Bayfront project. Their participation makes the whole process more diverse and more dynamic."

Francis Go, a senior at Sweetwater High School, began his involvement with EHC organizing around the development of the Chula Vista Mid-bayfront. He said the LEAD Academy has given him a new perspective on EHC's work.

"I am surprised at how much I did not know about the environment until now," Go said. "I can see that EHC is protecting everyone for the better good. EHC is very loyal to the people and will do whatever it takes to help them in anyway. I believe EHC will last a lifetime for its determination and abilities to help others."

Go said his training and activities with EHC have shown him the power of community organizing. It's something he says he would recommend to other youth interested in making a positive impact in their community.

"I wish that other youth would learn what I already learned: A voice from one person is not enough, but voices from many people are a whole lot better."

For more information about the program, contact Nohelia Ramos at (619) 235-0281 or email NoheliaR@environmentalhealth.org

'Working with EHC is good opportunity to be involved in the community and be active, instead of just ignoring our problems.'

~ Irene Bueno, Chula Vista High School

EHC, Logan residents demand cleanup of toxic contamination at school site

Environmental Health Coalition and residents of San Diego's Logan Heights community are demanding that toxic waste located at the site of a new elementary school proposed by the San Diego Unified School District be cleaned up to a safe level. Environmental investigations conducted at the site have revealed elevated levels of lead, arsenic, cadmium, barium, zinc and dioxins. This contamination is an unacceptable threat to children's health.

SDUSD plans to build the new Laura G. Rodriguez Elementary School on 6.5 acres located between Greely Street, Martin Avenue, and 31st and 32nd Streets in Logan Heights. During a public meeting on September 17, EHC and community residents told the state's Department of Toxic Substances Control that they are concerned the agency is not taking a precautionary approach to cleaning up the site, and is leaving behind dangerous lead-contaminated soil.

"This is a critical environmental justice problem as it could further damage the health of children who already are disproportionately impacted by toxics in their community," said Leticia Ayala, Director of EHC's Campaign to Eliminate Childhood Lead Poisoning.

"DTSC's process for calculating how clean the site should be is based on outdated lead poisoning standards," she said.

DTSC's proposed lead soil remediation level of 255 parts per million is higher than the more health protective goal of 150 parts per million set by the California Environ-



Martha Sanchez, right, a Promotora with EHC's Campaign to Eliminate Childhood Lead Poisoning, shares information about lead poisoning prevention with a local family during September's Fiestas Patrias celebration in Sherman Heights.

mental Protection Agency, and was determined by using an outdated blood-lead level standard of 10 micrograms per deciliter. However, recent scientific evidence shows that there is no safe level of lead for children.

Lead poisoning is the number one environmental health threat to children under 6-years-old. It can result in reduced IQ, learning disabilities, behavioral problems, hyperactivity and increased aggression. Many children in the greater Logan Heights area already are at high risk for childhood lead poisoning from other sources in their neighborhood, including deteriorating lead paint found on many of the older homes in which they live.

TAKE ACTION!

Contact the San Diego Unified School District and the Department of Toxic Substances Control to demand that they protect children's health by implementing the most protective cleanup of the site before construction of Laura G. Rodriguez elementary school begins. Also, demand that SUSD ensure lead-safe work practices during the cleanup to protect the health of workers and the community from contamination.

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EJ Demo pledges support to end diesel truck pollution problem

Environmental Health Coalition's Logan Area Community Action Team (CAT team) on August 14 won important support from the Barrio Logan Environmental Justice Demonstration Project for its campaign to make Barrio Logan safe from the impacts of diesel truck pollution.

More than 50 Logan Area residents filled the community room of the Mercado Apartments to talk about the health hazards caused by diesel trucks traveling to and from the Port of San Diego, which operates in the western portion of the of the community. The trucks are a serious cause of safety, noise and health problems, and Barrio Logan's mixed industrial/residential zoning makes the trucks an unfair burden on residents. The California Air Resources Board estimates that diesel particulate matter represents 70 percent of the cancer risks from air toxics in urban areas.

CAT team members, with support from EHC's Toxic-Free Neighborhoods Campaign staff, presented EJ Demo partners with information gathered from interviews conducted with residents. The information showed an overwhelming concern with trucks that park and idle in residential areas, noisily disrupting the community and spewing the same deadly diesel fumes emitted when they travel through it. The hazards caused by trucks parking and idling are a product of zoning that allows business to operate in residential neighborhoods, and poor enforcement of parking regulations by the City of San Diego.

Following the presentation and public discussion, EJ Demo partners signed a pledge to work with the community to solve the diesel truck problems. Some of EHC and community's proposed solutions include pursuing more vigilant parking enforcement by the city and fines for operators who park trucks in residential areas, city rezoning



Liliana Guzmán, a member of the Logan Area Community Action Team, shows members of the EJ Demo Project photos that document the diesel truck problem in Logan Heights and Barrio Logan.

of parking areas near residences, and a new community plan for Barrio Logan that ends mixed use zoning for industries and residential areas.

The EJ Demo Project, which was created by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in partnership with EHC, is a roundtable of local, state and federal agencies, as well as large and small businesses, community organizations and residents. It's mission is to promote environmental justice in Barrio Logan by reducing air contaminants, eliminating unhealthy land use practices, and promoting children's health in the communities of Barrio Logan and Logan Heights.

California voters reject rollback of Civil Protections

EHC efforts help defeat Prop 54

Voters on October 7 overwhelmingly defeated Proposition 54, a ballot initiative that would have prohibited state and local agencies from gathering or using information needed to identify racial and ethnic disparities in public education, health, environmental protection, contracting, and employment. Final voting numbers showed 64 percent of ballots cast rejected the proposition.

Environmental Health Coalition Office Manager Patricia Hipolito, who acted as EHC's lead organizer in a grass-roots effort to defeat Prop 54, called the outcome an important victory for public health and the environment. Hipolito spearheaded efforts for phone banking with EHC members and outreach to target communities in San Diego and Chula Vista, educating voters on the proposition and urging them to vote against it.

"This initiative was not about privacy. It was about barring access to information and hiding inequities in

communities of color," Hipolito said. "We at EHC knew this, and concentrated our efforts in September and October into defeating Prop 54. This is a victory of information over misguided rhetoric."

There is significant documentation that environmental hazards are disproportionately concentrated in communities of color. The so-called "Racial Privacy" initiative would have removed one of the basic tenets of the environmental justice movement: our Right-to-Know. Studies demonstrate that race, not income, education, or other factors, is the most important reason for existing disparities in environmental harms.

The initiative would have deprived environmental justice and public health agencies of critical evidence about how pollution and other environmental hazards are distributed in California.

EHC would like to thank all of our members and supporters who took a stand for civil rights and helped defeat this insidious initiative.

Update: Developments in the fight to cleanup *Metales y Derivados*

In recent months, there have been important developments in the case of *Metales y Derivados*, the abandoned toxic site in Tijuana that Colonia Chilpancingo residents and Environmental Health Coalition have organized around in a campaign to compel cleanup.

- On September 2, Mexican President Vicente Fox dismissed Environment Secretary Víctor Lichtinger, who in June 2003 had made a commitment to the remediation of the *Metales* site during the Annual Council meeting in Washington, D.C. of the North American Free Trade Agreement Commission for Environmental Cooperation. Greenpeace Mexico and the Mexican Network for Action Around Free Trade (Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio) denounced Lichtinger's replacement, Alberto Cárdenas, for shifting government policy from defending the environment to favoring business.
- The Federal Mexican Secretariat for Natural Resources and Environmental Protection

(SEMARNAT) informed EHC of the formation of a binational technical committee or workgroup made up of Mexican federal, state, and municipal government officials and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency representatives.

The committee's task is to find a viable solution to the contamination at the site. The Colectivo has not been invited to the meetings that this working group has held, but EHC and Colectivo members are working with U.S. and Mexican officials to facilitate inclusion of the Colectivo in the committee. The Colectivo held two meetings concerning *Metales* – one in Mexico City with an official of SEMARNAT and another one in Oakland with the new EPA US-Mexico Region 9 Border Coordinator. At both meetings, the Colectivo reiterated their right to join the cross border working group meetings.

For updates on the work of EHC's Border Environmental Justice Campaign, visit our Web site www.environmentalhealth.org

EHC fights to make Navy pay for outstanding discharge permits

The United States Navy is one of the largest water polluters in the San Diego region. But thanks to the hard work of Environmental Health Coalition, the Mayor of San Diego's Clean Water Task Force, and the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board, the Navy is one step closer to being in full compliance with clean water regulations.

Under the California Water Code, all polluters that receive Waste Discharge Requirement permits must pay annual fees to the State Water Resources Control Board. The Navy and Department of Defense (DoD) have never paid, claiming that they are exempt under federal sovereign immunity.

EHC's research revealed that under the federal Clean Water Act, DoD facilities are only exempt from paying punitive fees - for non-payment of fees or violations of a permit - but not from paying annual fees. EHC requested that the Regional Board take appropriate and swift action to ensure that federal facilities in our region comply with the law and pay their annual fees.

EHC brought this issue to the attention of Mayor Dick Murphy's Clean Water Task Force, which joined the cause and sent a letter to the State Water Board urging them to take the appropriate steps to ensure payment of annual fees by federal facilities in the region.

Due EHC's efforts, the Task Force's letter, and the Regional Board contacting the State Water Board, the Navy

has now paid approximately \$60,000 of their first-time "initiation" annual fees. However, there is much more work to be done.

During Fiscal Year 1995/96 through 2001/02, the Navy and the US Marine Corps failed to pay fees totaling \$158,000. And in 1999 alone, the Regional Board spent \$100,000 of staff resources in fixing deficient California Environmental Quality Act documents prepared by the Navy. The Navy has stated an unwillingness to pay its remaining outstanding fees.

In addition, the DoD is currently opposing new fee schedule changes at the State Board that would raise fees for all dischargers, including the DoD, to help fund the work of Regional Boards.

"The DoD cannot pick and choose which fees they wish to pay and not pay," said Albert Huang, policy advocate for EHC's Clean Bay Campaign. Huang said EHC will be tracking and commenting on the new fee structure changes and advocating for federal facilities to comply with environmental regulations, as other polluters are required to.

EHC would like to thank Mayor Dick Murphy, Councilmembers Scott Peters, Donna Frye, Michael Zucchet, and the Regional Board Members and Staff for their support in getting the Navy, and other federal facilities, to pay fees, and for sending a strong message to the State Board that this region will not continue to allow the DoD to pollute for free.

A plan to help San Diegans make ends meet

Environmental Health Coalition welcomes the Center on Policy Initiatives for a guest editorial in this issue of the Toxinformer.

The Center on Policy Initiatives was established in 1997 to promote higher standards of living for poor and moderate-income families through research, policy development, public education and effective advocacy.

The Center believes a fair economy is one in which economic opportunities are universally accessible. Specifically, a healthy community is one that offers good jobs, democratic workplaces, affordable health care, a clean and safe environment, quality childcare, affordable housing and secure retirement benefits.

It may come as a surprise to many, but San Diego is a much different place if you work in a low-wage industry. The themes of life for many working-class San Diegans have more to do with survival than recreation or career advancement. Many here live below the poverty line despite working full-time for minimum wage. With increasing frequency, low-wage workers are using the emergency room as their primary care physician because they cannot afford health insurance. Some working families have even resorted to sharing small apartments with other families because the only other housing option is to cross the border from Tijuana everyday.

There's no question that San Diego is an expensive place to live, and that working families are struggling harder than ever to get by. Even typically middle-class professionals are finding San Diego beyond their means. A recent study from the Center on Policy Initiatives found that the average four-person family in San Diego needs over \$50,000 a year in order to afford basic needs and be self-sufficient.

Wages are only part of the problem for working families. Medical emergencies are stressful enough, but imagine knowing that you cannot afford the treatment your spouse or child may need in order to survive. Nationally, an estimated 18,000 people die in America each year simply because they are uninsured and could not afford treatment. This is six times the number of individuals killed in the September 11, 2001 attacks. And it happens every single year.

San Diego is home to cutting-edge medical research and technology, and yet ironically, 500,000 San Diegans have no access to the most basic medical care. The cost of bad debt and charity care for the uninsured in the U.S. was estimated at \$310 million in 2001. Hospitals and

health care providers can't absorb those kinds of losses. The costs get passed on to taxpayers and employers that do provide health care – a benefit that is becoming increasingly expensive for businesses to provide.

The cost of housing is another important issue that is pushing San Diegans into Tijuana and Temecula. The median price of a home in San Diego is nearing \$400,000, a price far beyond the reach of many San Diegans. Rents also are skyrocketing along with out-of-control housing costs. CPI's research shows that a minimum wage worker here would need to work 125 hours a week in order to afford the median price apartment in San Diego.

Housing, health care and falling wages are creating pressures on low and middle-income families in San Diego. While our regional economy is performing better than many national averages, the quality of life in San Diego is at a crossroads. While there is no magic wand, there are ways we can begin to change the tide.

On November 5, the Rules Committee of the San Diego City Council will hear a proposed "Responsible Wage and Health Care Benefits Ordinance." The ordinance would apply only to companies that choose to do business with the City of San Diego. The living wage would be set at \$11.95 an hour, and employers covered by the law would be required to provide health care benefits or a higher wage.

The law is limited – it will directly affect an estimated 2,000 workers, out of the 1.2 million that exist in San Diego. Despite the sharp focus of this law, it will serve to lift 2,000 families out of poverty who would otherwise continue to struggle. It will provide them the resources to see a doctor rather than an emergency room for primary care. It will allow these families a better opportunity to provide a safe and clean roof over their heads.

Ultimately, the Responsible Wage and Health Care Benefits Ordinance will go far in setting an example of being a good employer. While it is not inexpensive or easy for employers to pay living wages and health care benefits, it is critical to the long-term success of our regional economy that we begin to address these issues to ensure our long-term profitability.

For more information on CPI's work on living wage in San Diego, call (619) 584-5744 or log onto www.sdlivingwage.org

Environmental Justice for All: Images from the Victory



Nohelia Ramos, Organizer with EHC's Clean Bay Campaign, foreground, joins a parade of environmental justice activists and community members on its way to the Oakland state building for the Cal/EPA Advisory Committee on Environmental Justice public hearing. For the full story, please see Page 3.

Nohelia Ramos, Organizadora de la Campaña para una Bahía Limpia de EHC, al frente, se une a un desfile de activistas de la justicia ambiental y miembros de la comunidad que van en camino al edificio estatal de Oakland para la audiencia pública del Comité Asesor de Cal/EPA. Para leer todo el artículo, vea la Página 3.

Guadalupe Aguirre de Luján, left, a resident of Colonia Chilpancingo, and member of EHC's Tijuana affiliate Colectivo Chilpancingo Pro Justicia Ambiental, and Magdalena Cerda, Organizer with EHC's Border Environmental Justice Campaign, join marchers for a final rally before entering the state building.

Guadalupe Aguirre de Luján, izquierda, residente de la Colonia Chilpancingo, y miembro de la filial de EHC en Tijuana, el Colectivo Chilpancingo Pro Justicia Ambiental, y Magdalena Cerda, Organizadora con la Campaña Fronteriza de Justicia Ambiental se unen a los miembros del mitin final antes de entrar al edificio estatal.



Justicia Ambiental Para Todos: Imágenes de la Victoria



Members of EHC's Toxic-Free Neighborhoods Campaign hold an EHC banner in a show of support during public testimony at the Advisory Committee meeting. Pictured from left to right: Monseratt Hernandez, member of the TFN's Logan Area Community Action Team; Francisca Jimenez, TFN Organizer; Paula Forbis, TFN Director; Hays Witt of TFN's Neighborhood Revitalization Project; Maria Moya, TFN Lead Organizer, and Sonia Rodriguez, TFN Administrative Assistant.

Los miembros de EHC, la Campaña para Barrios Libres de Tóxicos (TFN por sus siglas en inglés) llevan un letrero en muestra de apoyo durante el testimonio público en la reunión del Comité Asesor. De izquierda a derecha: Monseratt Hernandez, miembro del Comité de Acción Comunitaria de la zona de Logan de TFN; Francisca Jimenez, Organizadora de TFN; Paula Forbis, Directora de TFN; Hays Witt del Proyecto de Revitalización Comunitaria de TFN; Maria Moya, Organizadora Líder de TFN, y Sonia Rodriguez, Asistente Administrativa de TFN.

Leticia Ayala, right, Director of EHC's Campaign to Eliminate Childhood Lead Poisoning, offers testimony to the Advisory Committee while CeCLP Promotoras Maria Coronel, left, and Martha Sanchez stand ready to offer their own stories of environmental justice challenges in their communities.

Leticia Ayala, derecha, Directora de la Campaña para Eliminar el Envenenamiento por Plomo en los niños de EHC (CeCLP por sus siglas en inglés) da testimonio al Comité Asesor mientras Maria Coronel, y Martha Sanchez, izquierda, promotoras de CeCLP se encuentran listas para ofrecer sus propios relatos sobre los retos de la justicia ambiental en sus comunidades.

