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Capretz: Making environmental justice a priority in San Diego

BY NICOLE CAPRETZ, GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

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Editor's note: Over the next few days, leaders from local environmental organizations will blog about their "Report Card" and the future of San Diego's environmental policy. This is the third of 10 blogs.

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Environmental justice is the right of all people and communities to live, work and play in a clean and safe environment. Historically, people of color and the poor are exposed to greater environmental hazards in their homes, on their jobs and in their neighborhoods than society at large.

1 vote

buzz up

Environmental Health Coalition (EHC) has been promoting social change and environmental justice in San Diego for 30 years. We believe that justice is accomplished by empowered communities acting together to make social change.



We are proud partners in the release of the first city of San Diego Environmental Quality Report Card. We applaud Councilmembers Donna Frye and Todd Gloria for their impressive "A" grades on such a wide-range of environmental issues, including two critical environmental justice votes.

Two issues at City Hall in 2009 offered the City Council the opportunity to help protect and empower San Diego's environmental justice communities. The first was the appointment of a new San Diego Port Commissioner; the second was spending our green energy stimulus dollars in a way that benefits communities most impacted by existing energy industries.

The Port Commissioner vote presented an opportunity for the City Council to give those communities most affected by the Port and Port-related industrial activities a seat at the table and a voice in decision making. Port Commissioner nominee Diane Takvorian, founder and executive director of Environmental Health Coalition, has spent 30 years fighting to protect and empower the communities adjacent to the Port's most polluting operations. She had the most experience, expertise and trust of those communities, and residents turned out in force to support her appointment. Kudos to Councilmembers Frye and Gloria for nominating Takvorian and to Councilmember Sherri Lightner for supporting her nomination after her candidate was voted down. Unfortunately, after three rounds of voting, the council opted to keep the status quo and appointed another nominee.



Environmental attorney Nicole Capretz leads Environmental Health Coalition's campaign for green energy and good jobs.

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1 hour, 28 minutes ago
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The second vote centered on how San Diego will spend \$12.5 million of federal energy stimulus dollars, and which communities would see the benefits. By leading a coalition of environmental, labor and community-based organizations, Environmental Health Coalition successfully created an open, transparent and public process for making recommendations on how to spend these funds. Approved unanimously by the City Council, the process resulted in a diverse mix of green energy projects that will benefit city operations and the broader community. In particular, we are heartened by the \$3 million dollars set aside to fund home energy retrofits in economically distressed communities.

The Environmental Report Card series:

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Now, organizations like Environmental Health Coalition will make sure these new green energy programs are designed and implemented in a way that benefits all communities, reduces pollution, and creates a new clean-energy economy that lifts us out of the recession. It is essential that environmental justice communities benefit from this clean-energy economy by investment in their homes and neighborhoods, the creation of quality jobs with family-supporting wages, and job training and supportive services for people of color and women.

A strong clean-energy economy will also help address the climate crisis, which is one of the biggest threats to environmental justice communities. Climate change is not only a serious global threat to public health, the environment, and the economy, but will also have the greatest impacts on low income communities of color. We need to respond to the climate crisis by building a new economy that solves the problem while creating opportunities for all.

Environmental attorney Nicole Capretz leads Environmental Health Coalition's campaign for green energy and good jobs. Capretz worked with Councilmember Donna Frye and has taken on environmental and social justice issues in San Diego for more than 10 years.

Tags: [city council](#), [City Hall](#), [climate change](#), [Diane Takvorian](#), [Donna Frye](#), [Environmental Health Coalition](#), [Environmental Justice](#), [global warming](#), [programs](#), [Public Health](#), [San Diego Port Commissioner](#), [SDNN](#), [Sherri Lightner](#), [todd gloria](#)

This entry was posted on Thursday, March 11th, 2010 at 6:56 am and is filed under [A More Perfect Union](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.

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one comment

Comment by: [San Diego Resident](#) Posted: March 11, 2010, 2:46 pm

Environmental Justice issues are very important and I hope that when making decisions the Mayor and City Council Members remember that people are holding them accountable for those decision they make.

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