

African American Environmentalist Association

Op-Ed

NEW YORK CITY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE LAW SIGNED

New York Mayor Bill de Blasio signed the New York City Environmental Justice Act (Bills 886 & 395) on April 25, 2017. Vulnerable environmental justice communities in New York City have been without formal protection from disproportionate environmental hazards. It took 14 years, but the passage of this legislation provides environmental protection for those environmental justice communities.

The African American Environmentalist Association (AAEA) drafted the original Environmental Justice Bill for Councilman Charles Barron in 2003 and Councilmember Charles Barron introduced the bill (Int. No. 404) in 2004 with seven cosponsors. After meeting with Councilwoman Inez Barron in 2014 to request re-introduction of the legislation and after much review and revisions by the Committee on Environmental Protection, Councilwoman Barron introduced the legislation that was signed today.

Bill No. 886 is a local law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to identifying and addressing environmental justice issues. Int. No. 886 sets up an interagency task force to develop agency-wide plans to assure that environmental justice is incorporated into the planning and implementation of agency duties. The legislation also creates an associated environmental justice advisory board, reflecting geographic balance, comprised of environmental justice community appointees who are directors, members or employees of environmental justice organizations and at least two appointees

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who are directors, members or employees of organizations engaged in research related to human health.

Bill No. 359 is a local law to amend the New York City charter and the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring a study of potential environmental justice communities in New York City and the publication of the results of such study on the city's website. It call for an identification of pollution sources, recommendations to mitigate adverse environmental impacts and a publication of the results of the study on the City's website.

These environmental justice laws are historic day for New York City because they provide citizens formal environmental justice protections. In addition to Charles and Inez Barron, special recognition should also go to Environmental Protection Committee Chairman Costa Constantinides and Counsel for the Environmental Protection Committee Samara Swanston for their work in getting these bills passed.