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Opinion

How the Clean Energy Win in Michigan Provides a Roadmap for Other States

If you live in Detroit or another part of Michigan where there's a looming threat of bodily harm from fossil fuel pollution, it just got a little easier to breathe a sigh of relief ... and to maintain your ability to breathe in general.

The historic Clean Energy Future Package and Clean Energy and Jobs Act, just recently signed into law by Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, will greatly accelerate the state's transition to the exclusive use of clean power sources like wind and solar.

That's a victory for Michiganders and for the country's goals of slashing the pollution that fuels climate change and harms our health. It's also a major win for environmental justice, hard-hit communities in a state, and workers.

Michigan's codified commitment to fighting the pollution driving climate change is inherently good news for the communities of color that bear a disproportionate burden of the effects of the crisis, and the benefits go even further. New incentives in the bills to make buildings energy efficient will have an outsized positive impact for these communities, where a higher number of the homes are old, drafty, and not energy efficient.

Finally, air pollution from



Ben Jealous

Guest Columnist

many of the power and industrial plants, which are also disproportionately located in these communities, will be reduced by the state's mandates for clean energy. This is huge for all Michiganders, and especially for those communities where public health

“A higher number of the homes are old, drafty, and not energy efficient.

is suffering from pollution.

The Detroit tri-cities area – encompassing Detroit, River Rouge, and Ecorse – and other parts of Michigan experiencing the worst air pollution are predominantly Black or Black and Latino. The Harvard Medical School Primary Care Review has pointed out that within the two zip codes that make up Southwest De-

troit alone, “there are more than 150 facilities that emit toxic fumes, gasses, chemicals, and particulate matter.”

Black residents make up 80 percent of one of those zip codes, 48217, a statistic noted at an October gathering of activists, near the Marathon Petroleum Corporation's refinery in Southwest Detroit, by Ember McCoy, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Michigan's School for Environment and Sustainability, in discussing the disproportionate impact of air pollution on the city's residents.

According to 2019 figures from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, adult residents of Detroit were 46% more likely to have asthma than the statewide average. And within Detroit, Black residents were hospitalized for asthma three times as often as white residents. And that's just asthma.

The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences says this type of pollution is also known to increase rates of cancer, cardiovascular disease, neurological and immune disorders, and other health concerns. And, as McCoy also noted at that Detroit panel discussion, “certain pollutants, when combined, as they are in the air, are worse together than they are alone individually ... but we

still measure them and regulate them as if they're acting separately.”

So, yes, a lot still needs to be done. Especially in terms of how these chemical and particulate pollutants are regulated at the federal level. Still, we shouldn't lose sight of the positive action that states like Michigan are taking right now and the example it sets for other states.

There's a lot to be hopeful about in the clean energy bills' impact on public health. The bills also set a powerful example for how to help ensure a just transition away from fossil fuels with strong protections for labor. Part of the clean energy package is the creation of the Community and Worker Economic Transition Office.

The office will develop a plan and coordinate efforts to address the impact on workers in the shift from fossil fuels to renewables, helping to ensure that no worker is left behind. By delivering historic federal action in the Inflation Reduction Act, the Biden administration has already given states a powerful way to capitalize on massive federal investments in their economies and a green future for us all.

Read the rest of this commentary at [TheSkanner.com](https://www.theskanner.com)

“The Teaching Our Own History” Task Force

(First in a Series)

“I'm for truth, no matter who tells it. I'm for justice, no matter who it is for or against. I'm a human being, first and foremost, and as such, I'm for whoever and whatever benefits humanity as a whole.” Malcolm X

We have launched a statewide task force in conjunction with the Florida General Baptist Convention, Inc., Reverend Dr. Carl Johnson, President, to demand that the governor of Florida and the State Department of Education teach Black history accurately, factually, and forthrightly. In the spirit of Dr. King, in the State of Florida, we organized a task force labeled, “Teaching Our Own History.” Carter G. Woodson, the founder of Negro History Week, encouraged us to not sit idly by and allow this system to “mis”-educate Black people.

Our Task Force will present to the government a comprehensive curriculum that correctly and effectively teaches Africa and African American

Reverend Dr. RB Holmes, Jr

Bethel Missionary Baptist Church

history to students in Florida's public schools. Moreover, we will develop forty (40) plus “Freedom Schools” by 2025. We will not sit idly by and allow any governor to erase

“We will not sit idly by and allow any governor to erase the accurate teaching of Black history

the accurate teaching of Black history.

The Objectives of “The Teaching Our Own History” Task Force are as follows:

- To encourage the accurate and unbiased teaching of African American history, culture, experiences and invaluable contributions in the state of Florida and this nation
- To develop strategies and

solutions to support and strengthen public education in marginalized communities

- To develop and adequately support 40 Freedom Academies across the state of Florida
- To create significant after school programs for students in Title One schools in marginalized communities across the state of Florida, using an age-appropriate

Florida to develop laboratory schools on their respective campuses by 2025

- To cultivate and create partnerships with foundations, businesses and philanthropists to support programs and events that consistently celebrate the contributions of African American history, culture, literature, faith and heritage

We all must redouble our efforts to fight for social justice, voting rights, civil rights, diversity, equity and inclusion. The dismantling of programs of diversity, equity and inclusion is shameful and insulting.

Over the next several weeks, selected members of “The Teaching Our Own History” Task Force will publish articles for dissemination through The National Black Press, addressing the critical components for teaching our own history. I encourage our readers to enthusiastically engage in meaningful discussions in their various constituent groups and organizations as we “speak truth to power.”

African American History Curriculum to strengthen reading, writing and mathematics skills

- To create summer “Freedom Schools” to teach youth the importance of African American contributions, self-respect, and personal responsibility
- To empower and encourage the three private HBCUs in