



*Commonwealth of Virginia*  
*Office of the Governor*

## *Executive Order*

### **NUMBER SEVENTY THREE (2017)**

#### **ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ADVISORY COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

##### **Part I - Importance of the Initiative**

The Constitution of Virginia states that it is the Commonwealth's policy to "protect its atmosphere, lands, and waters from pollution, impairment, or destruction, for the benefit, enjoyment, and general welfare of the people of the Commonwealth." The protection of our natural resources applies equally to all individuals. However, some environmental impacts may be compounded or concentrated as the result of demographic factors. This issue, known as environmental justice, is defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, faith, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

It is important that no segment of the population, especially individuals most impacted and vulnerable, should bear disproportionately high or adverse effects from pollution. To ensure that all people and perspectives have a voice, the Commonwealth needs a sustained conduit for recommendations on environmental justice. While some state agencies incorporate environmental justice into their review process, there is currently no consistency in how these issues are evaluated within the Executive Branch.

##### **Part II – Establishment of the Advisory Council on Environmental Justice**

The Commonwealth requires a consistent, action-oriented approach to incorporating environmental justice into decision-making. Accordingly, I hereby formally convene the Governor's Advisory Council on Environmental Justice ("Council") to provide independent advice and recommendations to the Executive Branch.

### **Part III – Composition of the Council**

The Governor will appoint members to carry out the assigned functions of the Council, and the members shall serve at the Governor's pleasure. In addition, staff support may be provided by the following individuals or their designee:

Secretary of Natural Resources;  
Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry;  
Secretary of Commerce and Trade;  
Secretary of Education;  
Secretary of Health and Human Resources;  
Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security; and  
Secretary of Transportation;

### **Part IV – Duties of the Council**

The Council shall provide advice and recommendations to the Executive Branch on the following:

1. Integrating environmental justice considerations throughout the Commonwealth's programs, regulations, policies, and procedures;
2. Improving the environment and public health in communities disproportionately burdened by environmental pollution and risks;
3. Ensuring transparent, authentic, and equitable engagement in decision-making, building capacity in disproportionately burdened communities, and promoting collaborative problem-solving for issues involving environmental justice;
4. Strengthening partnerships on environmental justice among governmental agencies, including Federal, State, Tribal, and local governments;
5. Enhancing research and assessment approaches related to environmental justice;
6. Receiving comments, concerns, and recommendations from individuals throughout the Commonwealth; and
7. Developing resources and strategies to provide and disseminate information to the public.

The Council will draft an annual report containing specific recommendations in furtherance of these issues, including recommendations on proposed legislation, regulations, policies, and commencement of research initiatives.

**Effective Date of the Executive Order**

This Executive Order shall be effective upon its signing and shall remain in full force and effect unless amended or rescinded by further executive order.

Given under my hand and under the Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia this 31<sup>st</sup> Day of October, 2017.

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Terence R. McAuliffe, Governor

Attest:

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Kelly Thomasson, Secretary of the Commonwealth