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FAILING THE CLIMATE JUSTICE TEST

An analysis of California's projected climate resilience funding and its effects on Californians by region, race, and gender

JUNE 2021

At this pivotal moment of unprecedented budget surplus, California could invest in equitable climate action or take a wrong turn

37%

Executive Summary

The California budget is slated to spend at least $7.7 billion on climate resilience, drought alleviation, and wildfire prevention. Specifically how the dollars will be spent is still under negotiation. At this pivotal moment of unprecedented budget surplus, California could invest in equitable climate action or take a wrong turn.

The legislature has drawn their climate resilience priorities from bills considered this session: AB-1500 and SB-45.[1] If these bills indeed become the blueprint for climate resilience, then the prospect for an equitable climate policy for California is dim.

The Gender Equity Policy Institute conducted an analysis of these two proposals to estimate how the benefits generated by them would be distributed across region, gender, race, and ethnicity.[2]

The Institute finds that the proposed investments would be distributed to Californians in a radically unbalanced, unfair, and unequal way.

The whitest and most male regions of California, the North Coast and Sierra Nevada regions, are projected to receive a windfall of investment far out of proportion to their share of the state population. At the same time, the southern California counties of Los Angeles, Ventura, and Orange, together with the urbanized parts of Riverside and San Bernardino counties, which is home to 45% of Californians, half of all Black and Latino Californians, and nearly half of all women in California, is projected to receive a stunningly small proportion of funding.

With a focus on traditional infrastructure and no funding for public health or other more gender-balanced occupations, 92% of the jobs potentially created by these bills' investments will go to men.

As the following report details, by nearly any measure, the investments proposed by AB-1500 and SB-45 fail the climate justice test. They fail the regional equity test. They fail the racial justice test. They fail the gender justice test. And they receive a failing score of 37% on the Gender Equity Policy Institute's gender equity scale.

California has been a pioneer in climate action, innovating equitable policies to tackle the wide-ranging climate crisis. But should these current budget negotiations take the priorities of AB-1500 and SB-45 as the blueprint for the state's climate resilience policy, then the needs of the many millions of Californians who are most vulnerable to climate impacts will go unmet.

Key Findings:

- With a focus on traditional infrastructure and no funding for public health or other more gender-balanced occupations, 92% of the jobs potentially created by the measure are projected to go to men.[3]
- The North Coast region is projected to receive 13 times more per capita than the Los Angeles region.
- That translates into a yawning gender and racial gap in funding. The North Coast region is 71% white and disproportionately male.[4] The greater Los Angeles region is 67% BIPOC and disproportionately female.[5]
- 45% of Californians live in the Los Angeles region, but only 21% of funds are estimated to be invested there.
- The Sacramento Valley, the most female region in the state, is the only other region projected to receive less than its fair share of spending.
- The co-sponsors of AB-1500 carve out $731 million for specific projects in their home regions. This represents 65% of all dedicated funding in the bill.
- The co-sponsors of SB-45 carve out more than $343 million for specific projects in their home region. This represents 39% of all dedicated funding in the bill.
- Increasing funds to address extreme heat and investing in public health and urban cooling solutions would make the climate resilience funding more equitable by region, race, and gender.

Regional Funding Imbalance Leads to Race and Gender Inequities

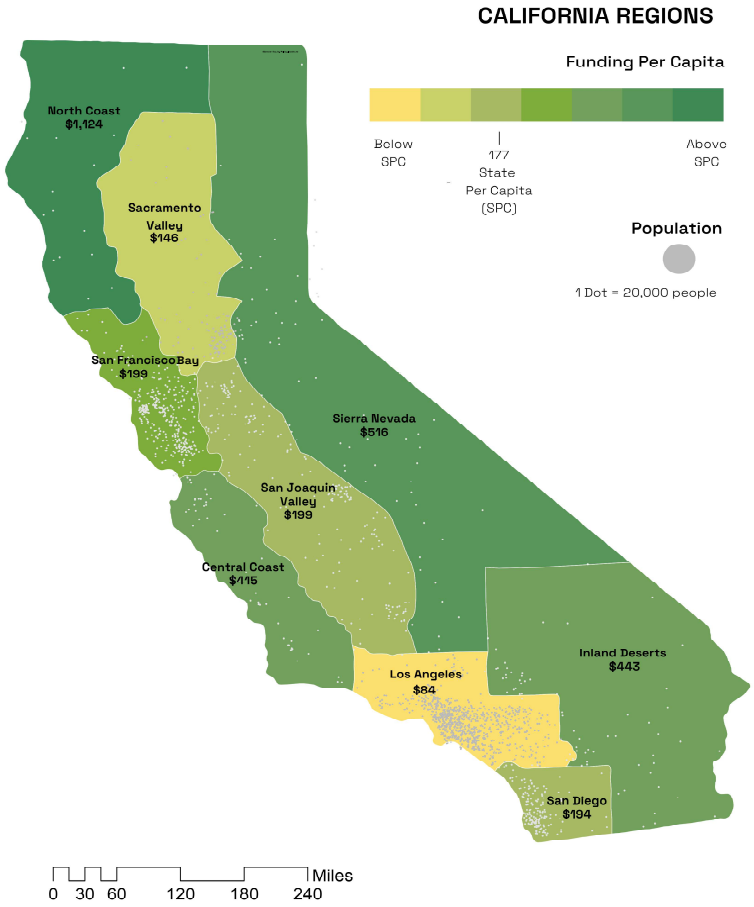

Figure 1

The Fourth Climate Change Assessment, produced by the state of California, identified nine distinct climate regions in the state: the North Coast, the Sierra Nevada, the San Francisco Bay, the Sacramento Valley, the Central Coast, the San Joaquin Valley, the Los Angeles, Inland Deserts, and San Diego.[6]

Estimates by the Gender Equity Policy Institute show that the two most male, most white, and least populous regions, the North Coast and Sierra Nevada, are likely to receive a disproportionate amount of funding. Relative to its share of the state population,[7] the North Coast region is projected to receive 536% more in funding. The Sierra Nevada region is projected to receive 191% more in funding (See Table 1). On a per capita basis, the North Coast region will receive $1,124 in investments, while the Sierra Nevada region will receive $516. For comparison, an equal distribution of funds statewide would amount to investments of $177 per capita.

By contrast, the Los Angeles region, the least white, most populous, and the second most female region in California, is projected to receive only $84 per capita in investments. Seven out of ten people in the region are nonwhite. Half of all Black and Latino Californians call the region home.

The Sacramento Valley, the most female region in the state, is the only other region projected to receive less than its fair share of spending—$146 per capita.

TABLE 1:
Climate Resilience Funding by Region

California Climate Regions	Percent of CA Population	Funding per Capita	Funding Relative to Share of State Population
North Coast	1%	$1,124	+536%
Sierra Nevada	3%	$516	+191%
Inland Deserts	3%	$443	+150%
Central Coast	3%	$415	+134%
San Francisco Bay	20%	$199	+13%
San Joaquin Valley	10%	$199	+12%
San Diego	8%	$194	+9%
Sacramento Valley	7%	$146	-18%
Los Angeles	45%	$84	-53%

GEPI analysis of ACS (2015-2019) & AB-1500.

Two additional regions stand to benefit disproportionately from AB-1500 and SB-45. The Inland Deserts region, home to bill co-sponsor, is projected to receive $443 per capita in investments, while the Central Coast is projected to receive $415 per capita in investments — 5 times more per capita than Los Angeles and 3 times more per capita than the Sacramento Valley. Like the Sierra Nevada and North Coast regions, these regions are disproportionately male compared to the regions that receive the least in funding relative to their share of the state population. The remaining regions, the San Francisco Bay, San

Diego, and the San Joaquin Valley, likewise receive a slightly greater share of funding relative to their share of the state population.[8]

With the important exception of the Los Angeles region (44 percent Latino), the most Latino regions receive a funding proportionate to their population. This is largely driven by investments in: 1) to improve the safety and quality of drinking water; and 2) multiple projects related to the Salton Sea in the Inland Deserts. The water quality investments are some of the few areas in the package that are equitably targeted.

These differences detailed above are unfair on a regional basis. Individuals in northern California stand to benefit more than individuals in the most populous

BIPOC Californians Concentrated in Regions Projected to Receive Disproportionately Less from State Climate Resilience Funding

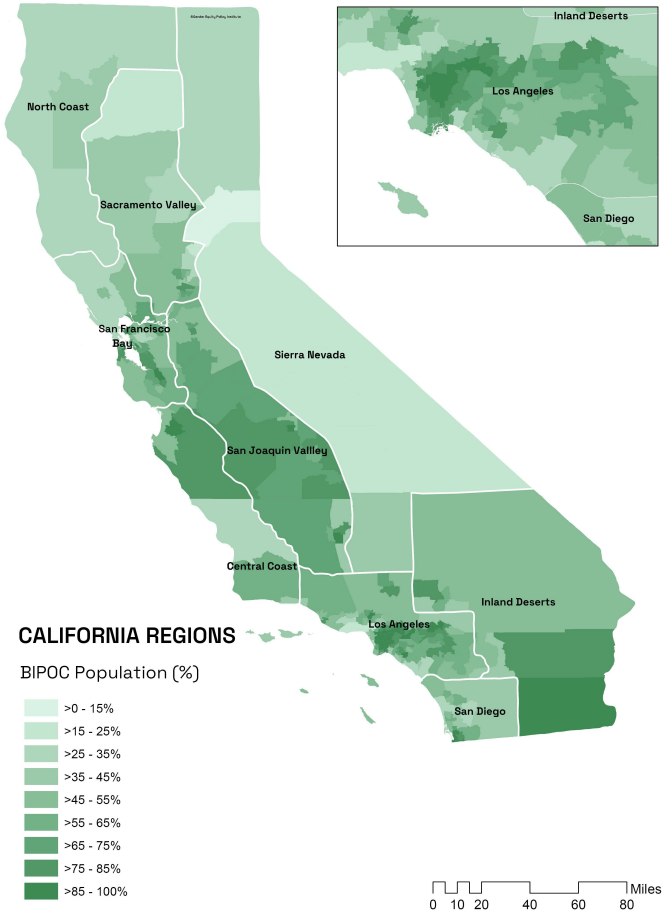

Figure 2

counties of southern California. Residents of urban and metropolitan areas are also relatively neglected, as the population density map shows. (See Figure 3) This is particularly concerning, as cities are most vulnerable to extreme heat, the number one health problem associated with climate change.

Even more alarming, these regional disparities produce massive racial and gender inequities in the distribution of benefits.

As the map in Figure 2 shows, the BIPOC population of California is concentrated in the regions projected to receive less than their fair share of funding. The greater Los Angeles area, projected to receive the lowest relative share of funding and the least per capita, has a higher percentage of women (50.6 percent) in comparison to seven other California regions, a difference the Institute found to be statistically significant.[9]

In short, regions with disproportionately more women and people of color are shortchanged by this blueprint for climate resilience funding, while regions with disproportionately more men and white people are projected to receive the most benefits.

For Men Only: Misplaced Priorities Shut Women Out of Promised Green Jobs

The legislature's climate resilience bills would, the authors of AB-1500 pledged, "create long-term green jobs to help the state meet its climate goals."[10] But women, who will bear an equal share of the costs of these investments, will see few direct economic benefits.

The Institute's analysis of the occupations that could see job growth from the proposed climate resilience investments estimates that 92 precent of the jobs will be filled by men. Consider that the $1.1 billion in AB-1500 and $2.2 billion in SB-45 for wildfire prevention would create new jobs in firefighting and forest industries. According to census data, men hold 95 percent of California's jobs in the former and at least 92 percent of them in the latter.[11] The legislature's bills include no measures, mechanisms, or incentives to mitigate

preexisting occupational gender inequality.

The problem stems from the projects and activities the legislature deems are climate priorities. Occupations where there is dramatic sex segregation will receive most of the job creation stimulus. Whether it is removing obsolete dams or constructing water infrastructure, men dominate the jobs.

While occupational segregation is a stubborn problem,[12] particularly in construction and protective service occupations like firefighting, it is not inevitable that only male-dominated jobs will be created by climate investments. Infrastructure proposals at the federal level have been formulated with gender equity in mind. As that model shows, the 21st century definition of infrastructure has to be broader and more inclusive, not only for equity or to meet the real needs of workers, but to accelerate and sustain economic growth.

California, which prides itself on its pioneering role in climate policy and progressive policy in general, can and must do better than this.

Not Cool: Overlooking California's Cities and Its People

The U.S. Global Change Research Program and other climate change experts widely agree that extreme heat has a greater impact on human health than any other climate impact. The Fourth Assessment warns that Californians will suffer more illness and be at greater risk of early death from rising temperatures and longer heat waves. One study estimated that under a high greenhouse gas emission scenario, high temperatures could result in an additional 6,700 – 11,300 additional deaths annually in the state.[13] Translating that estimate of premature annual mortality into monetary terms, the Fourth Assessment calculates that high temperatures from climate change will cost California $50 billion a year in direct costs.[14]

The health of urban dwellers and outdoor workers is most at risk from extreme heat. And the most marginalized and economically disadvantaged are particularly vulnerable, as they often lack resources to afford quality housing, air conditioning, and health insurance.[15]

These bills allocate not a single dollar to public health. Not a dollar is allocated to CalOSHA, the agency

Population Density by California Climate Change Assessment Region

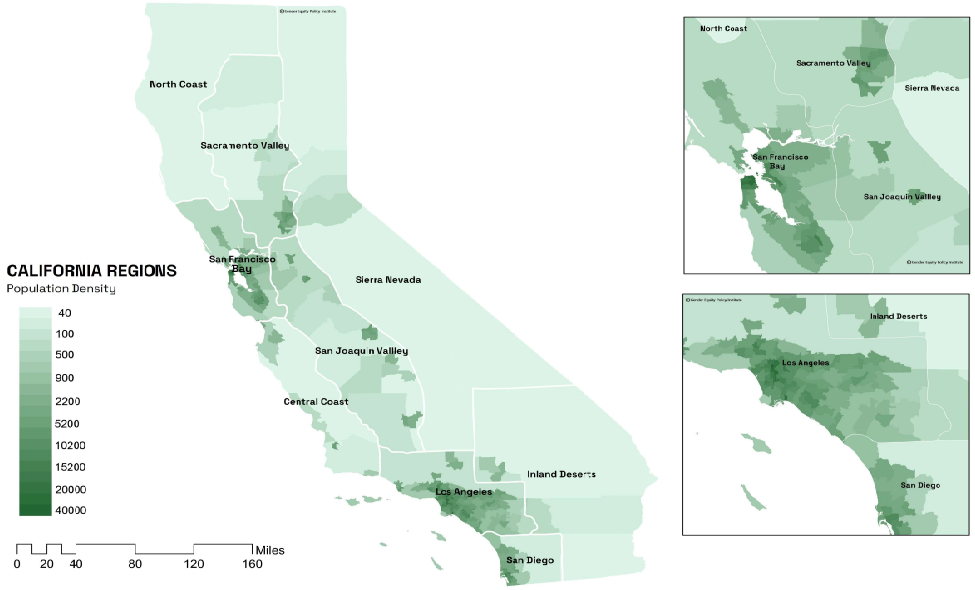

Figure 3

responsible for enforcing laws to protect farmworkers and warehouse workers from extreme heat and other workplace hazards. Of the $1.1 billion dedicated to wildfire prevention, no funds are dedicated specifically to addressing the devastating impacts of wildfires on air quality for California's largely Latino agricultural communities.

The women, men, and children who live in the most populated urban parts of the state, who are most imperiled by the health threatening heat impacts of climate change, are particularly overlooked. (See Figure 3) Only 0.6 percent of funds are specifically dedicated to mitigating the urban heat island effect — less than the funds specifically dedicated to improving the climate resilience of fish and wildlife habitat.[16] The Senate bill is dramatically worse than the Assembly's on regional climate resilience and extreme heat, proposing $1.5 billion less than the Assembly.

To be sure, California's climate strategy must include nature-based solutions to address wildfires, floods, sea level rise, and wildlife protection. But the legislature's proposed climate resilience funding overlooks some of the most devastating climate impacts analyzed in California's Fourth Climate Change Assessment. The resources directed to protecting people, particularly the people most vulnerable to climate change impacts, are paltry compared to what is dedicated to traditional conservation measures.

Following the legislature's blueprint would lead to the neglect of the human health impacts of climate change, particularly from extreme heat and wildfire smoke. In this alone, the legislature's proposals fail to protect the health and well-being of most Californians and the majority of Black, Indigenous, people of color in California.

Conclusion

Climate change exacerbates existing inequities. Without deliberate and targeted focus on building resilience for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, those inequities will be perpetuated.

Should these bills continue to serve as the blueprint for this year's historic climate investments, Californians will see radically different and unequal benefits from their tax dollars.

Investments favor regions that are disproportionately white and male, while shortchanging those with the majority of the state's women and people of color.[17] Investments in protecting wildlife, fish, and natural lands dwarf investments in protecting people and human health.

Jobs created by climate investments will go almost exclusively to men, perpetuating industrial-age gender inequalities even as California transitions to the green economy of the future. The economic stimulus investments reflect a stunning lack of awareness about existing occupational segregation by sex (particularly in fire, forestry, and construction occupations). Opportunities to invest in climate solutions where there is a more balanced division of jobs between women and men, such as public health, are completely ignored.

Fortunately, the many types of inequities in the current approach to climate resilience can be corrected and mitigated through a more balanced allocation of funding and resources.

The following measures are among the many efforts California could undertake to advance regional, race, and gender equity in climate resilience policy are:

Invest in cooling solutions with a focus on urban areas, including cool roofs, cool playgrounds, cool pavements and streets, and regional resilience hubs.

Provide resources to CalOSHA to support its enforcement of protections for workers most impacted by extreme heat—such as farmworkers, outdoor construction workers, and warehouse workers.

Invest in public health workforce and infrastructure to protect all Californians and stimulate job creation in a more gender-balanced sector.

Incentivize Hiring Women by funding programs that recruit and retain women in nontraditional careers and providing incentives to contractors and employers for hiring women.

Sources

[1] The relationship between budget negotiations and existing climate bills was discussed at the public meeting of the Technical Advisory Council Quarterly Meeting, on June 11, 2021. (https://opr.ca.gov/meetings/tac/2021-06-11/). For the legislature's specific climate resilience projects and priorities, see the bill text and analyses of AB-1500 and SB-45 at https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220AB-1500 and https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220SB-45.

[2] Experts hand-coded the line-item allocations in AB-1500 and SB-45, based on agencies' past funding history; projects specified; type of climate impact; and location of protected resources, assets, and people. The specific findings in this report pertain in most cases to AB-1500, the larger of the two bills and the one which remains active in the Assembly. Our analysis of SB-45 reached similar conclusions about funding disparities by region, gender, and race.

The regional analysis is based on the Fourth Climate Change Assessment division of the state into nine climate regions. (For the regional maps and reports, see: https://www.climateassessment.ca.gov/regions/.) While the US Census divides California into 10 regions, these regions combine areas with distinct economies, geographies, demographics, and climates. The Institute determined that the Fourth Assessment regions provide the greatest insight when analyzing the state's climate policy. (Bedsworth, Louise, Dan Cayan, Guido Franco, Leah Fisher, Sonya Ziaja, (California Governor's Ofc of Planning and Research, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, California Energy Commission, California Public Utilities Commission), "Statewide Summary Report, California's Fourth Climate Change Assessment," 2018. Publication number: SUMCCCA4-2018-013, https://www.energy.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2019-11/Statewide_Reports-SUM-CCCA4-2018-013_Statewide_Summary_Report_ADA.pdf. (Hereafter, Fourth Assessment.) GEPI used geo-referenced data from ACS to analyze population and demographics across CCA regions.(Gender Equity Policy Institute analysis of American Community Survey (2015-2019), Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Sophia Foster, Ronald Goeken, Jose Pacas, Megan Schouweiler and Matthew Sobek. IPUMS USA: Version 11.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2021. https:// doi.org/10.18128/D010.V11.0. (Hereafter, GEPI Analysis of ACS, IPUMS USA.)

[3] GEPI Analysis of ACS, IPUMS USA.

[4] The North Coast region includes the counties of Mendocino, Humboldt, Del Norte, Lake, Trinity, and Siskiyou. "White" include all people who identify as white and not Hispanic or Latino. (GEPI Analysis of ACS, IPUMS USA.)

[5] The Los Angeles region includes the counties of Los Angeles, Ventura, Orange, and adjacent urbanized portions of Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Fifty-seven percent of the region's population lives in Los Angeles County. BIPOC includes all people who identify as Black, American Indian, Pacific Islander, Native Alaskan, Native Hawaiian, Hispanic (Latino), Asian, other race, or multiracial. (GEPI Analysis of ACS, IPUMS USA.)

[6] Fourth Assessment.

[7] The North Coast and Sierra Nevada regions are majority men, respectively 51.2 percent and 50.9 percent, differences also found to be statistically significant in comparison to the state average, and in comparison to the Los Angeles and Sacramento Valley regions.

[8] The Inland Deserts and Central Coast regions are majority men, respectively 50.8 percent and 50.5 percent, differences also found to be statistically significant in comparison to the state average, and in comparison to the Los Angeles and Sacramento Valley regions.

[9] Gender compositions tend to cluster around 50:50—nearly equal proportions of men and women. ACS data (2015-2019) shows the Los Angeles and Sacramento Valley regions have a majority of women, 50.6 percent and 50.9 percent, respectively.

[10] "Assemblymembers Eduardo Garcia and Kevin Mullin Introduce Climate Resilience Bond with Historic Investments to Protect California," Press release, Feb. 22, 2021. https://a22.asmdc.org/press-releases/20210222-assemblymembers-eduardo-garcia-and-kevin-mullin-introduce-climate

[11] GEPI Analysis of ACS, IPUMS USA.

[12] See "Occupational Segregation in the United States," (Washington Center for Equitable Growth, Oct. 2017) for background and analysis of the issue (https://equitablegrowth.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/092717-occupational-seg.pdf)

[13] Fourth Assessment, 39, citing Ostro et. al. (2011).

[14] Fourth Assessment, Table 6, 42.

[15] Fourth Assessment, 38-39.

[16] AB-1500 specifies $40 million for urban heat island effect. Only $150 million more in the bill is specifically directed to urban areas. Section 80654 specifies $50 million for fish and wildlife habitat. Funding that could potentially go to fish and wildlife habitat reaches into the hundreds of millions of dollars.

[17] Combined, 52.3 percent of California's women live in the Los Angeles and Sacramento Valley regions.

ABOUT THE GENDER EQUITY POLICY INSTITUTE

OUR MISSION

The Gender Equity Policy Institute is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing opportunity, fairness, and well-being for all people through research and education exposing the gender impacts of the policies, processes, and practices of government and business.

OUR WORK

We conduct and publish research on the best practices for advancing gender equity. We analyze and score public policies and business practices to identify the effects on people of all genders, with particular attention to the impacts on groups, such as women, people of color, and LGBTQ+ people, who have been systematically disadvantaged by discrimination, bias, and structural inequality. By educating policymakers, business leaders, and advocates about the inequities and financial disparities embedded in seemingly neutral economic and political processes, we provide the tools and knowledge that leaders need to rebalance systems, guarantee equal benefits and opportunities, and secure a just and sustainable future for all Americans.

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