



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release
Tuesday June 14, 2016

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Illinois Advisory Committee to the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights Releases Advisory Memorandum: Civil Rights and Environmental Justice in Illinois

The Illinois Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights released an advisory memorandum following a series of panel discussions on environmental justice in the State. The Committee's purpose was to examine potential disparities related to the negative health consequences of poor air quality and other environmental hazards on the basis of race, color, and/or national origin; particularly in the Chicago neighborhoods of Little Village, South Lawndale, Pilsen, and the City's Southeast side; as well as the City of Waukegan, Illinois. The Committee heard testimony from academic experts and legal professionals in the fields of environmental law and health; community advocates; local, state, and federal government officials; and individual community members directly impacted by environmental contamination near their homes.

Through this testimony, the Committee identified a number of concerns regarding disproportionate concentrations of industrial pollutants in and around communities of color; improper or inconsistent enforcement of current environmental justice protections; poor data collection on important air quality measures; and economic and housing segregation which may perpetuate these disparities. The Committee also identified a number of recommendations for the Commission's consideration in their national 2016 study on the topic, which may help to remedy some of these concerns. Committee Chair Juan Carlos Linares said, "After having listened to various viewpoints and concerns, the Illinois Advisory Committee is pleased to put forward its recommendations that aim to give voice to Environmental Justice Communities in Illinois, and to support the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in their national study on this issue."

Full text of the Committee's memorandum is available at:
http://www.usccr.gov/pubs/SAC_AdvisoryMemo.pdf

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with studying and advising the President and Congress on civil rights matters and issuing a federal civil rights enforcement report. For information about the reports and meetings of the Commission and its State Advisory Committees, visit <http://www.usccr.gov>.

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