



MARYLAND LEAGUE  
OF CONSERVATION VOTERS

# 2021 Environmental Legislative Summary

The 90-day 2021 Maryland legislative session ended on April 12, after a marathon final day known as “Sine Die.”

This session presented unprecedented challenges, but even the obstacles of a (hopefully) once-in-a-lifetime pandemic did not stop us—or you—from loudly advocating and raising our political voices to protect Maryland’s air, land, water, and our communities.

Our community advocates and partners sent more than 5,000 messages to their legislators, while Maryland LCV testified on 28 bills, held countless lobby meetings, and coordinated strategically with scores of partner organizations representing tens of thousands of Marylanders. We also hosted our first-ever virtual legislative rally for hundreds of enthusiastic advocates, and ran a robust advertising campaign that reached more than 1 million Maryland residents.

With your support and activism, we made significant progress this year and greatly appreciate the dedication and hard work of so many members of the General Assembly.

We are disappointed, however, that the House and Senate were unable to agree on groundbreaking climate legislation. We also recognize that additional work is needed to achieve true environmental justice in Maryland. To do so, we must not only stop pollution but also support community-driven solutions that create social and economic opportunities, especially in communities that disproportionately bear the impacts.

Your voice and your vote—holding our elected officials accountable—will continue to be crucial to environmental progress in Maryland.

Following are environmental highlights from the 2021 Maryland legislative session.



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## VISION

A healthy environment  
for everyone in Maryland



## MISSION

Activate Marylanders  
to promote and pass  
equitable laws and  
policies for clean  
water, healthy air, and  
a resilient climate

## TRANSPORTATION

The General Assembly prioritized the state's public transit system by ensuring that the Maryland Transit Administration has sufficient funding to return the fleet of buses, trains, subways, and light rail and its infrastructure to a state of good repair.

Increasing the safety and reliability of our public transit system will allow for increased usage of transit and take steps towards reducing greenhouse emissions from our transportation sector.

Additionally, on its last day, the Senate passed a measure to transition our state

fleet to zero-emission buses, which will ensure that our public transit system itself does not contribute to carbon emissions. Maryland LCV took a leading role in the passage of both of these significant pieces of legislation.

We are disappointed that legislators were unable to pass a bill that would have allowed school systems to partner with public utilities to fully transition school buses to zero-emission. Diesel emissions contribute to negative health impacts in primarily low-income communities. This bill had important environmental justice implications.



### TRANSIT SAFETY & INVESTMENT ACT (HB114/SB199)

Mandates six years of minimum "state of good repair" funding to address a \$2 billion shortfall to repair the existing fleet of buses, commuter rail, subway, light rail, and transit infrastructure. It also adds a Western Maryland MARC Rail extension study.



### ZERO-EMISSION BUS TRANSITION ACT (HB334/SB137)

Requires all new buses purchased by the Maryland Transit Administration beginning in 2023 to be zero-emission vehicles, to ensure complete fleet transition.



### ELECTRIC SCHOOL BUS PROGRAM (HB832)

Would have created a pilot project for school districts to enter into partnerships with utilities for electrification of school buses and grid storage. The bill passed the House but failed to receive a vote in the Senate Finance Committee.

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE



Delivering environmental justice to communities in Maryland that are disproportionately harmed by environmental and public health problems is a priority for Maryland LCV.

During the 2021 Legislative session, we saw small steps that advance environmental justice, including the passage of reforms to the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities.

In the big picture, however, Maryland still

lacks a comprehensive policy framework that will help us achieve environmental justice. We need to not just stop pollution but also support solutions that are community-driven and geared toward creating social and economic opportunities to communities disproportionately impacted by pollution.

Maryland LCV will continue to work with our community partners to achieve this important paradigm shift.



### COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE & SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES (HB1207/SB674)

Will increase representation and accessibility to the Commission for those who bear the brunt of environmental and public health harms.



### CLIMATE SOLUTIONS NOW ACT (HB583/SB0414)

One key provision in this failed bill was for the Commission on Environmental Justice & Sustainable Communities to assess impacts to communities, make recommendations to address those impacts, and assess how much of the state's climate funds are spent in these communities.

## CLIMATE



One of Maryland LCV's top priorities was the **Climate Solutions Now Act** (SB0414/HB583), which would have increased Maryland's greenhouse gas reduction requirements and achieved net-zero emissions by 2045.

Maryland LCV worked up to the last moments of the 90 day session to secure a victory on this bill.

Unfortunately, the Maryland Senate and House of Delegates were unable to reach an agreement over the two different versions of the bill that each chamber had passed earlier this session.

As a result, the legislation did not pass and we missed a major opportunity to position Maryland as a national leader in addressing climate change.

Fortunately, some of the legislation's components were added to other bills that were approved.

Maryland LCV played a key role in the passage of a bill to transition the state's transit bus fleet to zero-emission buses, and another bill that provides funding to plant five million trees in eight years, including 500,000 in urban areas, starting in 2023.



### REMOVING BLACK LIQUOR from the RENEWABLE ENERGY PORTFOLIO STANDARD (RPS) (HB875/SB065)

With the passage of this bill, Maryland will no longer subsidize "black liquor" – a toxic waste product from paper production – as a renewable energy source.



### COMMUNITY CHOICE ENERGY (HB768)

As an alternative to the investor-owned energy supply system, Community Choice Energy (CCE) will put the power of electricity purchases in the control of the residents in a community, while leaving ownership of power plants and the grid in the hands of utilities.



### NET-METERING (HB569/SB407)

This bill encourages and promotes more renewable energy, by doubling the statewide limit on net metered capacity from 1,500 MW to 3,000 MW.



### CLIMATE SOLUTIONS NOW ACT (HB583/SB414)

This bill, as described above, failed to pass.



### COAL COMMUNITY TRANSITION ACT of 2021 (HB66/SB48)

If passed, would have codified dates by which Maryland's coal-fired power plants will retire, consistent with dates announced by the owners of five of the six remaining plants, and helped ensure a just transition for displaced workers.

*Science tells us we need to aggressively reduce our greenhouse gas emissions if we are to meaningfully address the urgency of the climate crisis.*

# WATER & TREES



Maryland LCV played a leading role in successfully advocating for key water- and forest-related bills this session, bringing together a multitude of diverse stakeholders to support bill champions and strategically urging improvements to the bills, including the crucial forest mitigation banking bill described below.



## TREE SOLUTIONS NOW ACT (HB994)

This bill funds programs to plant five million trees over the next ten years, including 500,000 trees in underserved urban communities. It also temporarily allows jurisdictions to continue "conservation banking" to meet reforestation requirements and ensures the legislature in future years will enact a comprehensive forest conservation policy based on the results of a key forest assessment study.



## STORMWATER MANAGEMENT ACT (HB295/SB227)

Ensures the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) uses up-to-date precipitation data in water quality control standards.



## ENVIRONMENTAL & RESOURCES TRANSPARENCY (HB204/SB324)

This major step forward for government transparency will require the Maryland Department of Environment and Department of Natural Resources to maintain a public database and publish enforcement efforts online.



## STOP PFAS POLLUTION ACT (HB022/SB195)

If passed, this bill would have comprehensively addressed pollution from per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), which are a family of approximately 5,000 man-made organic chemicals used in a myriad of consumer products.



## PLASTIC BAG REDUCTION ACT (HB314/SB223)

If passed, this bill would have banned plastic bags at retail check-out and allowed jurisdictions with existing fees to continue collecting fees on paper bags.

## SUMMARY

Although this legislative session was different and often difficult, our goal remained the same: **activating Marylanders to promote and pass equitable laws and policies for clean water, healthy air and a resilient climate.** We are eager to continue our work together as we look, even now, to the 2022 General Assembly session, where we can take up unfinished business and further advance the causes of combating climate change and environmental injustice.



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