Request for an Immediate National Utilities Shut-off Moratorium and Long-Term Actions for Utility Justice

Dear President-Elect Biden and Vice President-Elect Harris:

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters nationwide, we urge you to implement a nationwide moratorium on the shut-offs of electricity, water, broadband, and all other essential utility services during the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing economic strife. We ask that you take executive action on day one to address our country’s deepening shutoff crisis.

Further, while a nationwide moratorium provides a necessary respite during this crisis, it does not tackle the systemic issues driving these all-too-common utility injustices across America. We therefore urge you to invest significant stimulus funds into long-term solutions, including funding for distributed clean energy systems and support public renewable energy infrastructure, for broadband affordability and equity supports, and for public water infrastructure and percentage-of-income water affordability plans, which enhance the long-term energy, broadband, and water resilience for all communities, in particular low-wealth households, communities of color, and Indigenous peoples across the country.

Public support for a nationwide utility shut-off moratorium is vast: last April 2020, 830 organizations—including utility justice, civil rights, energy democracy and justice, environmental justice, conservation, faith, labor, health advocate, consumer advocate, and legal educational organizations—called on Congress to pass legislation implementing such a moratorium. While the House of Representatives has twice passed a COVID relief bill that includes this critical protection, the GOP-controlled Senate has failed to act for the people.

The COVID-19 emergency has resulted in unprecedented job losses, the burden of which is disproportionately harming low-wealth families, especially in communities of color and American Indian and Alaska Native communities. This loss of income threatens the ability of families to pay their rent or...
mortgage, to buy food, and to shoulder monthly bills for electricity, water, broadband, and other essential utility services. Access to water is foundational to living and fighting the coronavirus, which necessitates constant hand-washing and sanitation. Electricity access is necessary for families to keep their lights, refrigerators, and key medical devices on. Broadband access is essential for low-income students who face being left behind as education moves online, for people who have lost jobs to search for new employment, and for families to access telemedicine and receive up-to-date information about the pandemic. No one should ever be forced into the impossible position of choosing between food and connection, between shelter and healthcare, between water and heat.

These injustices existed long before the pandemic, which has both exacerbated these chronic issues and highlighted their urgency. In 2017, nearly 19 million households reported receiving notice that they were at risk of having a utility service disconnected due to lack of payment. Before the pandemic, 22 percent of households nationwide did not have internet at home. Lacking access to essential electric, broadband, and water services disproportionately harms low-wealth communities, communities of color, and Indigenous peoples.

We urge you to act quickly to implement a nationwide utility shut-off moratorium for all essential services via executive action that can be taken immediately, as expanded on below, and to offer struggling families immediate and life-saving relief in the midst of this national health crisis. We also urge you to build on these actions by making utility justice a priority for this administration and pursuing the long-term funding and regulatory solutions necessary to ensure that water, power, and broadband services are universally accessible and affordable.

Executive Actions on Day 1

1. Direct the CDC to issue a moratorium on energy, water, and broadband shut-offs for nonpayment and restore service where previously disconnected. As with housing, utility access is critical to ensure individuals live in safe and healthy conditions and that stay-at-home and other pandemic-related orders are effective. The CDC director should use their authority under Section 361 of the Public Health Services Act to issue a moratorium that bars utility shut offs, as the CDC did with evictions, but should also include provisions ensuring that:
   1. Utilities are required to maintain customers’ service rather than requiring an affirmative declaration from their customers;
   2. Utilities are prohibited from charging late fees and instituting other punitive measures for nonpayment;
   3. Utilities are required to ensure customers have access to payment assistance programs and deferred payment plans or arrearage management programs;
   4. The moratorium lasts for the duration of the public health emergency plus an additional 12 months to provide customers with a buffer period to pay off their debt; and
   5. There is a clear enforcement mechanism such as an order to utility regulators and local governments to ensure enforcement or the development of a separate enforcement agency.

2. Appoint a director to the CDC who will champion utility access and equity as a public health priority, particularly during COVID.

3. Appoint an FCC Chair to immediately reclassify broadband internet access service as a telecommunications service, and to use their broad authority under Title II of the Communications Act to impose a nationwide moratorium on broadband and phone service disconnections for nonpayment during the Covid-19 pandemic, with safe service restoration for all households previously disconnected for nonpayment, and waivers of all relevant reconnection fees as well as data cap overage fees.
Long-term Infrastructure Stimulus

All utilities:
1. Encourage agencies (e.g., CDC, FCC, FERC, etc) to develop an emergency moratorium on utility shut off that is automatically triggered when future public health, climate, or other emergencies are declared.
2. Support legislative efforts to establish long-term emergency planning for utility access and equity.

Power:
1. Support legislative Green New Deal efforts to (i) finance and spur distributed energy generation, including community solar and rooftop solar, as well as battery storage and smart grid infrastructure to provide long-term energy and climate resilience for all American families; and (ii) establish energy affordability, including percentage-of-income payment programs and arrearage management programs for low- and moderate-income households and households negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic;
2. Use the President’s existing executive authorities to redirect funding and provide loan guarantees to spur the development of long-term clean energy solutions including distributed solar and storage; direct agencies to remove barriers to community-owned solar diffusion and provide technical assistance to communities to develop and operate these programs, including working to unlock private finance; Support research, legislative, and regulatory efforts to reform the electric utility business model to create a clean and equitable energy system for all; and
3. Ensure that federal agencies, including federal power authorities (e.g., TVA), are leaders in clean and distributed energy adoption by requiring fully renewable portfolios with an ambitious carve-out of distributed energy resources.

Broadband:
1. Work with Congress to implement a monthly emergency broadband benefit of up to $50 per month available to all low-income households and those financially impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic to put towards any broadband plan of their choosing. The benefit should last for the duration of the national health emergency and at least 6 months beyond.
2. Champion the passage of the Accessible, Affordable Internet for All Act and the Emergency Broadband Connections Act, or similar legislation which includes broadband pricing transparency requirements, digital equity funding, support for public broadband options, and key measures to preserve the FCC’s Lifeline program which helps low-income households connect to basic communications services.
3. Support the FCC in using its broad authority under Title II to expand and modernize the Lifeline program to adequately support subsidies for broadband internet access service.

Water:
1. Support the Emergency Water Is a Human Right Act and other legislative efforts to establish water affordability programs with percentage-of-income payment plans and arrearage management programs for low- and moderate-income households and households experiencing lost wages and jobs due to COVID-19; and
2. Champion the passage of the Water Affordability, Transparency, Equity, and Reliability (WATER) Act as part of an infrastructure stimulus package to restore the federal government’s commitment to funding drinking water and wastewater infrastructure and promote universal access to safe and affordable public water for every person in the country.
Sincerely,

Lead Organizations for No Utility Shutoffs Coalition

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Director, Energy Justice Program
CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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Senior Organizer
CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

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Public Water for All Campaign Director
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Johanna Bozuwa
Manager, Climate & Energy Program
THE DEMOCRACY COLLABORATIVE

Additional Resources on Status of Utility Shutoffs:

1. ENERGY: The Center for Biological Diversity’s Live Tracker on Electricity Shutoffs Moratoria shows that expiring state-level electricity shut-off moratoria could leave as few as six states with binding protections by mid-November. Currently, 33 states have no moratorium on electricity shutoffs.

2. BROADBAND: An investigation revealed that nearly 500 complaints have been filed with the FCC over internet shut-offs by broadband providers that had signed the voluntary Keep Americans Connected pledge, despite the pledge’s exhortation not to disconnect internet service for nonpayment. Now that the FCC has sunset its pledge, many providers have walked back these already-shaky promises, even as they raise prices and fees.

3. WATER: Food & Water Action’s Live Tracker shows 25 state moratoriums on water shutoffs and at least 200 local moratoriums have already expired, and 190 million people (58% of the country) are not protected from losing basic water services, as of December 1.

Attachments
- 830+ group organizational letter
- 113 Member of Congress letter
- House Oversight letter asking the CDC for a shutoff moratorium, organizational sign-on letter to the CDC, and the CDC response
April 13, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Re: INCLUSION OF NATIONWIDE MORATORIUM ON ELECTRICITY, WATER, BROADBAND, AND ALL OTHER ESSENTIAL UTILITY SHUT-OFFS AS PART OF NEXT COVID-19 RESCUE PACKAGE

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, and Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters nationwide, we, the undersigned 830 organizations—including utility justice, civil rights, energy democracy and justice, environmental justice, conservation, faith, labor, health advocate, consumer advocate, and legal educational organizations—urge you to **implement a nationwide moratorium on the shut-offs of electricity, water, broadband, and all other essential utilities as part of the next COVID-19 rescue package.** Further, while a nationwide moratorium provides a necessary temporary respite during this COVID-19 crisis, it does not tackle the systemic issues driving these all-too-common utility injustices across America. We therefore urge you to **invest significant stimulus funds into long-term solutions, including funding and financing for distributed clean energy systems and funding for percentage-of-income payment plans for municipal water systems, broadband, and other utility services,** which enhance the long-term energy, water, and utility resilience for all communities, in particular low-wealth households, communities of color, and tribes across the country.

While we thank Congress for the CARES Act’s inclusion of important paycheck and eviction protection measures, the act unfortunately failed to include any moratorium on shut-offs of the basic utility services that families need to survive and protect themselves during this health pandemic. We applaud and thank Speaker Pelosi and House Chairpersons Lowey, Neal, Pallone, DeFazio, Scott, Velazquez, Waters, Maloney, and Lofgren for including provisions effectuating a utility shut-offs moratorium in H.R. 6379 Taking Responsibility for Workers and Families Act. We also applaud and thank Senators Merkley and Markey, Representatives Lawrence, Tlaib, and Dingell and other members of Congress for their leadership in spearheading letters and introducing legislation calling for a moratorium on utility shut-offs.¹ The public support for the nationwide moratorium is vast; at the start of the crisis,

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over 600 organizations called for a nationwide moratorium on utility shut-offs, subsequently followed by multiple organizational letters representing the views of millions of Americans. With such widespread support across Congress and the public, we urge that both the House and Senate champion the basic human rights of people in the next COVID-19 stimulus package by including robust moratorium provisions on utility shut-offs to address this issue head-on.

The COVID-19 emergency is resulting in the widespread loss of jobs that is unprecedented in modern history—and in particular, is disproportionately harming low-wealth families, especially in communities of color and American Indian and Alaska Native communities. This loss of income threatens the ability of families to pay their rent or mortgage, to buy food, and to shoulder monthly bills for electricity, water, broadband, heat, and other essential utility services. These utility services must be retained to ensure basic family survival and to fight the health pandemic at ground zero. Access to water is foundational to living and fighting the coronavirus, which necessitates constant hand-washing and sanitation. Electricity access is necessary for families to keep their lights, refrigerators, and key medical devices on and to power air conditioning as summer ensues. Broadband access is essential for low-income students who face being left behind as education moves online, for people who have lost jobs to search for new employment, and for families to receive up-to-date information about the coronavirus during shelter-in-place orders. Families should never be put in the impossible position where they must choose between food and sustaining access to their power and water services, or between shelter and getting care for the coronavirus or other illnesses.

First, we request Congress to implement a robust nationwide moratorium on all utility shut-offs, reinstatement of disconnected services, waiver of late-payment fees, and forgiveness of all bills for low-wealth households for the duration of the emergency and an extended grace period. To the extent that some state regulators and power providers have already instituted moratoria on electricity shut-offs, we call for national legislation that ensures that utility shut-off moratoria are implemented across all jurisdictions and that such moratoria have meaningful protections, particularly for struggling families. Over the course of the last several weeks, only half of all state governments, some local


governments, and numerous private and public utilities have implemented moratoria on utility shut-offs that, unfortunately, vary greatly in coverage and scope.\(^3\) To resolve the existing patchwork of moratoria, Congress should institute a nationwide moratorium on the shut-offs of all essential utilities that applies across the entire United States so that no family is unfairly left behind.

Moreover, the nationwide moratorium must be robust in duration, coverage and scope to offer meaningful protections to people. First, the nationwide moratorium must last for at least six months beyond the end date of the national state of emergency, in order to allow a sufficient grace period for families to recover from unemployment and other coronavirus-related impacts. Second, the legislation must ensure that all households whose services have already been cut off are reconnected. Third, the moratorium should waive all late payment fee accrual on utility bills through the end of the grace period. Finally, the legislation should forgive all bill payments for low-wealth people through the end of the grace period.

Second, we request Congress address the systemic issues underlying utility shut-offs by investing significant stimulus funds into long-term solutions, including financing and funding distributed clean energy systems and funding percentage-of-income payment plans for municipal water systems, broadband and other essential utilities. Unfortunately, millions of families each year are cut off from their utility services, and the coronavirus emergency exacerbates and highlights the urgency of these chronic issues. According to the most recently available 2017 data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 1.2 million households (or approximately 1% of total households) experienced utility shut-offs within the past three months of taking the survey, and 18.4 million households (or approximately 15% of total households) reported receiving notice within the prior three months to have utilities shut off for missed payments.\(^4\) Further, a national survey found that the average water utility disconnected 5% of households for nonpayment in 2016, affecting an estimated 15 million Americans. \(^5\) Finally, approximately 22% of households nationwide do not have home internet, including more than four million households with school-age children. Lacking access to these essential utility services disproportionately harms low-wealth communities, communities of color, and tribes.\(^6\) Moreover, the climate emergency has exacerbated the country’s extreme weather conditions—through unprecedented

\(^3\) See Energy Policy Institute, *LIVE: Utilities that have and have not suspended disconnects amid COVID-19*, [https://www.energyandpolicy.org/utilities-disconnect-coronavirus/](https://www.energyandpolicy.org/utilities-disconnect-coronavirus/) (last updated April 3, 2020); Food & Water Watch, *Local/State Water Shutoff Moratoria Amidst Coronavirus* (last updated April 9, 2020), [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/153Ze6RRZ-ZZ9oVkaSERhVHGMv3Z4laQDs0GRO7UmYnQ/edit#gid=1796772260](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/153Ze6RRZ-ZZ9oVkaSERhVHGMv3Z4laQDs0GRO7UmYnQ/edit#gid=1796772260).

\(^4\) U.S. Census Bureau, American Housing Survey, 2017 Delinquent Payments and Notices, [https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/ahs/data/interactive/ahstablecreator.html?s_areas=00000&s_year=2017&s_tablename=TABLE1&s_bygroup1=1&s_bygroup2=1&s_filtergroup1=1&s_filtergroup2=1](https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/ahs/data/interactive/ahstablecreator.html?s_areas=00000&s_year=2017&s_tablename=TABLE1&s_bygroup1=1&s_bygroup2=1&s_filtergroup1=1&s_filtergroup2=1).


\(^6\) See, e.g., NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program, *Lights Out in the Cold: Reforming Utility Shut-Off Policies as if Human Rights Matter*, March 2017, [https://www.naacp.org/climate-justice-resources/lights-out-in-the-cold/](https://www.naacp.org/climate-justice-resources/lights-out-in-the-cold/). The consequences of poverty are literally fatal; for example, without electricity access, lives have been lost due to extreme heat and cold, as well as disconnection from life-saving devices like respirators and medicines requiring refrigeration.
wild fires, heat waves, and increased frequency and intensity of storms—that necessitate a greater demand in electricity, water, and broadband services for survival and to maintain a basic standard of living, most especially in American Indian and Alaska Native and rural regions.

Therefore, we urge Congress to fund and finance long-term solutions that address the systemic issues driving utility shut-offs across America. First, Congress should implement a permanent ban on all utility shut-offs for all low-wealth families. Second, regarding electricity, Congress should inject significant stimulus funds into the establishment of and access to distributed clean energy systems, especially rooftop and community solar. Distributed clean energy generation is vital to equitable community development, local job generation, and the energy security and resilience of communities in the long-term. As millions across the country face the threat of electricity shut-offs due to coronavirus-precipitated job losses, it is more apparent than ever that decentralized systems can help families generate their own power and decrease dependence on centralized utilities to weather such crises, only sure to rise in the face of growing wealth inequality and increasing climate impacts. Moreover, we urge Congress to tackle our nation’s water affordability crisis head-on by fully funding municipal or rural water infrastructure through the Environmental Protection Agency’s State Revolving Loan Programs, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Water Grant Program, and other grant programs, and by providing funds to help municipal, nonprofit or rural systems establish percentage-of-income payment plans for water, sewer and stormwater bills, with arrearage forgiveness for low-income households. With respect to broadband services, we urge Congress to provide substantial funding for emergency broadband connectivity programs, aimed at connecting low-income families and those experiencing job and income loss due to the pandemic, both to meet immediate need and to support those struggling through the impending recession. Similar treatment of other essential utilities is also urged.

Thank you for your consideration of this urgent request.  

[Signatures start on next page.]

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8 For any questions regarding this letter, please reach out to Jean Su at the Center for Biological Diversity (jsu@biologicaldiversity.org) and Chandra Farley at the Partnership for Southern Equity (cfarley@psequity.org).
Sincerely,

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LETTER FROM 830 PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS

CALLING FOR NATIONWIDE MORATORIUM ON UTILITY SHUT-OFFS IN NEXT CORONAVIRUS PACKAGE

IN NEXT CORONAVIRUS PACKAGE

April 13, 2020

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LETTER FROM 830 PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS
CALLING FOR NATIONWIDE MORATORIUM ON UTILITY SHUT-OFFS
IN NEXT CORONAVIRUS PACKAGE

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LETTER FROM 830 PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS
CALLING FOR NATIONWIDE MORATORIUM ON UTILITY SHUT-OFFS
IN NEXT CORONAVIRUS PACKAGE  

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LETTER FROM 830 PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS
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IN NEXT CORONAVIRUS PACKAGE

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CALLING FOR NATIONWIDE MORATORIUM ON UTILITY SHUT-OFFS IN NEXT CORONAVIRUS PACKAGE

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Director
PUBLIC LANDS PROJECT

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Director of Policy & Strategy
RACE FORWARD
LETTER FROM 830 PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS
CALLING FOR NATIONWIDE MORATORIUM ON UTILITY SHUT-OFFS
IN NEXT CORONAVIRUS PACKAGE

April 13, 2020

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SUNRISE MOVEMENT

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NYC Delegation Leader
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LETTER FROM 830 PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS
CALLING FOR NATIONWIDE MORATORIUM ON UTILITY SHUT-OFFS
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Rabbim Executive Director
THE SHALOM CENTER

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REGIONAL GROUPS

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*Co-Founding Member & Artist*  
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*Co-Founder*  
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**BLUEWAVE SOLAR**

Ernesto Cruz  
*Director of Community Organizing*  
**CO-OP POWER**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michele Tingling-Clemmons</td>
<td>Convenor</td>
<td>GRAY PANTHERS OF METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakshmi Fjord</td>
<td>Founder, Convenor</td>
<td>PEOPLE’S TRIBUNAL ON ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Ogden</td>
<td>Producer</td>
<td>THE ENVIRO SHOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire Miller</td>
<td>Climate Justice Director</td>
<td>TOXICS ACTION CENTER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahtowin Munro</td>
<td>Co-Leader</td>
<td>UNITED AMERICAN INDIANS OF NEW ENGLAND (UAINE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanessa Luna</td>
<td>Co-Founder, Chief Program Officer</td>
<td>IMM SCHOOLS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evelyn Lynn</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>SOUTHERN CROSSROADS ORGANIZING PROJECT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brianna Knisley</td>
<td>Tennessee Campaign Coordinator</td>
<td>APPALACHIAN VOICES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis Zeller</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>BLUE RIDGE ENVIRONMENTALAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen Johnson</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td>CHRISTIANS FOR THE MOUNTAINS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danna Smith</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>DOGWOOD ALLIANCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Michelle Moore</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>GROUNDSWELL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veronica Butcher</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>MOTHERS &amp; OTHERS FOR CLEAN AIR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandra Farley</td>
<td>Just Energy Director</td>
<td>PARTNERSHIP FOR SOUTHERN EQUITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuck Barlow Jr</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>SAVING OUR SONS &amp; SISTERS INTERNATIONAL (SOSSI)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LETTER FROM 830 PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS
CALLING FOR NATIONWIDE MORATORIUM ON UTILITY SHUT-OFFS IN NEXT CORONAVIRUS PACKAGE

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LETTER FROM 830 PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS
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IN NEXT CORONAVIRUS PACKAGE

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FARM WORKER MINISTRY NORTHWEST

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UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

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WILDEARTH GUARDIANS

April 13, 2020
STATE & TERRITORY GROUPS

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ALABAMA ARISE

Daniel Tait
Chief Operations Officer
ENERGY ALABAMA

Michael Hansen
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GASP

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Michael Malcom
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INTERFAITH POWER & LIGHT, ALABAMA

ALASKA

Veri di Suvero
Executive Director
ALASKA PIRG

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AUDUBON SOCIETY OF CENTRAL ARKANSAS

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Steering Council Manager
350 BUTTE COUNTY

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Chapter Lead
350 CONEJO / SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

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Co-Founder
350 LONG BEACH

Laurie Litman
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350 SACRAMENTO

Emily Williams
Steering Committee Member
350 SANTA BARBARA

Heidi Harmon
Member
350 SLO

Sherry Lear
Organizer
350 SOUTH BAY LOS ANGELES

Orinio Opinaldo
Member
ALLIANCE OF CALIFORNIANS FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

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ARIDLAB,
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS

Sylvia Chi
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CALIFORNIA DEMOCRATIC PARTY
RENTERS CAUCUS
LETTER FROM 830 PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS
CALLING FOR NATIONWIDE MORATORIUM ON UTILITY SHUT-OFFS IN NEXT CORONAVIRUS PACKAGE

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*Energy Equity Programs Manager*
*CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE*

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*National Committee Person & Chair, Women's Caucus*
*CALIFORNIA YOUNG DEMOCRATS*

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*Executive Director*
*CENTER ON RACE, POVERTY & THE ENVIRONMENT*

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*CENTRAL CALIFORNIA ASThma COLLABORATIVE*

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CALLING FOR NATIONWIDE MORATORIUM ON UTILITY SHUT-OFFS
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MEDIA ALLIANCE

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A 350 BAY AREA GROUP

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Executive Director
NORTH BAY ORGANIZING PROJECT

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Member
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PEOPLE POWER SOLAR COOPERATIVE

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PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY,
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A JUST ECONOMY (SAJE)

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PALO ALTO

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SUNRISE MOVEMENT
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SANTA BARBARA

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SUNRISE MOVEMENT
SANTA YNEZ

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SEQUOYAH

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SANTA BARBARA

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SYNERGISTIC SOLUTIONS

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THAI COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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Technology Equity Director
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TREE SAN DIEGO

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*CEO & Founder*  
DEVELOPING CAPACITY COACHING, LLC

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BE THE CHANGE, COLORADO

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*Co-Chair*  
CALL TO ACTION CO

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*Director*  
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Brita Mackey  
*Hub coordinator*  
SUNRISE MOVEMENT COLORADO SPRINGS

Claire Scott  
*Board Member*  
TOGETHER COLORADO

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CONNECTICUT

Martin Man  
*Facilitator of Facilitators*  
FOSSIL FREE YALE

Moli Ma  
*Hub Coordinator*  
SUNRISE MOVEMENT NEW HAVEN

Karen Anderson  
*Hub Coordinator*  
SUNRISE MOVEMENT NEW HAVEN

Martin Man  
*Organizer*  
YALE ENDOWMENT JUSTICE COALITION
LETTER FROM 830 PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS CALLING FOR NATIONWIDE MORATORIUM ON UTILITY SHUT-OFFS IN NEXT CORONAVIRUS PACKAGE

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Associate Director
COLLABORATIVE CENTER FOR JUSTICE

Sharon Lewis
Director
CT COALITION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

FLORIDA

Alex Barrio
Political Director
ALIANZA FOR PROGRESS

Mary Gutierrez
Executive Director
EARTH ETHICS, INC

Nezahualc oyotl Xiuh tec utli
Research Coordinator
FARMWORKER ASSOCIATION OF FLORIDA

DeeVon Quirolo
President
NATURE COAST CONSERVATION

Angela DeMonbreun
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SOLAR UNITED NEIGHBORS OF FLORIDA

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SUNRISE MOVEMENT FLORIDA
Gulf Coast University

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Hub Coordinator
SUNRISE MOVEMENT
STEINBRENNER

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TALLAHASSEE FOOD NETWORK

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GEORGIA

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350 ATLANTA

Bobbie Paul
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ATLANTA GRANDMOTHERS FOR PEACE

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BLACK POWER BOOK CLUB AT GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

Gwendylon Smith
Member
CHARRS

Bishop Harvey Bee
Bishop
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH & CFA, GEORGIA

Jairo Garcia
Chair
CLIMATE REALITY PROJECT ATLANTA

Marsha Gosier
Founder, Marsha Gosier
CULTURE 64, INC

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EARTHSHARE GEORGIA

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FULTON ATLANTA COMMUNITY ACTION AUTHORITY

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President & CEO
GEORGIA ADVANCING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER, INC.

Helen Butler
Executive Director
GEORGIA COALITION FOR THE PEOPLE’S AGENDA

Brionté McCorkle
Executive Director
GEORGIA CONSERVATION VOTERS

Deborah Scott
Executive Director
GEORGIA STAND-UP

Phyllis Richardson
Director of Governmental Affairs
GEORGIA WAND

Lindsay Harper
Executive Director
GEORGIA WAND EDUCATION FUND

Berneta Haynes
Senior Director of Policy & Access
GEORGIA WATCH

Kate McGregor Mosley
Executive Director
INTERFAITH POWER & LIGHT, GEORGIA

Shanda-Joy Laws
Owner/Founder
LIVE FRESH

Dr. Rutha M. Jackson
Branch President
NAACP HOUSTON COUNTY BRANCH

Carol Yancey
Coordinator & President
OAKWOOD TRAILS NHW GROUP

Oreatha Ensley
Community Organizer
ORGANIZED CLAYTON INC

Lyndon Greene
CEO
PEOPLE UNITED FOUNDATION

Dr. Felicia Tillman
CEO
STEM PLAY THERAPY CENTER, INC.

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Member
SUMMECH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Odetta MacLeish-White
Managing Director
TRANSFORMATION ALLIANCE

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Co-Founder
UBUNTU COMMUNITY CATALYST
HAWAI'I

Laurel Brier
Co-Chair
APOLLO KAUAI

IDAHO

Holly Harris
Member
SNAKE RIVER ALLIANCE

ILLINOIS

Dave Davis
Co-Chair
350 KISHWAUKEE

Celeste Flores
Co-Chair
CLEAN POWER LAKE COUNTY

Renee Patten
Co-Chair
EDGEWATER ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT

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FAITH IN PLACE

Scott Onque
Policy Director
FAITH IN PLACE ACTION FUND

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Chair
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ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY CLINIC

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NUCLEAR ENERGY INFORMATION SERVICE (NEIS)

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Program Manager
PEOPLE FOR COMMUNITY RECOVERY

Deni Mathews
Chairperson
SAVE OUR ILLINOIS LAND

INDIANA

Robin Mohr
Core Member
350 INDIANA-INDIANAPOLIS

Kerwin Olson
Member
CITIZENS ACTION COALITION OF IN
Austin Britton  
*Group Leader*  
**GREATER LAFAYETTE CLIMATE SYNTHESIS**

Jesse Kharbanda  
*Executive Director*  
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Dori Chandler  
*Public Policy Director*  
**INTERFAITH POWER & LIGHT, INDIANA**

Andy Mahler  
*Director*  
**SHAGBARK, INC.**

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**SOLAR UNITED NEIGHBORS OF INDIANA**

Gabe Miller  
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**SUNRISE MOVEMENT INDIANA**

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*Operations Manager*  
**WHOLE SUN DESIGNS INC.**

---

**IOWA**

Joleen Jansen & James Osterhaus  
*Program Manager & Chairperson*  
**CLAYTON COUNTY ENERGY DISTRICT**

Gina Folsim  
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**CLIMATE ACTION TEAM**

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**DELAWARE COUNTY ENERGY DISTRICT**

Mike Carberry  
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Amy Bouska  
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**HOWARD COUNTY ENERGY DISTRICT**

Matt Russell  
*Executive Director*  
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Adam Mason  
*State Policy Organizing Director*  
**IOWA CITIZENS FOR COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT**

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Kayla Lodico  
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**SUNRISE MOVEMENT MINNESOTA**

Shanthi Chackalackal  
*Hub Coordinator*  
**SUNRISE MOVEMENT ST. OLAF**

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*Board President*  
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CALLING FOR NATIONWIDE MORATORIUM ON UTILITY SHUT-OFFS
IN NEXT CORONAVIRUS PACKAGE
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Thea Riofrancos
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THE IMANI GROUP INC

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Director of Justice Commission  
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Reverend  
INTERFAITH WORKER JUSTICE OF EAST TENNESSEE

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SUNRISE MOVEMENT RGV

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VERMONT WORKERS CENTER

UTAH

VERMONT

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CALLING FOR NATIONWIDE MORATORIUM ON UTILITY SHUT-OFFS
IN NEXT CORONAVIRUS PACKAGE

April 13, 2020
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**Friends of Buckingham**

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**Sunrise Movement Richmond**

Kelsey Wright  
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**Sunrise Movement Williamsburg**

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**United Parents Against Lead**

Irene Leech  
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**Virginia Citizens Consumer Council**

Heidi Berthoud  
*Director*  
**Virginia Community Rights Network**

Zakia Shabazz  
*Coordinator*  
**Virginia Environmental Justice Collaborative**
LETTER FROM 830 PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS
CALLING FOR NATIONWIDE MORATORIUM ON UTILITY SHUT-OFFS
IN NEXT CORONAVIRUS PACKAGE
LETTER FROM 830 PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS
CALLING FOR NATIONWIDE MORATORIUM ON UTILITY SHUT-OFFS
IN NEXT CORONAVIRUS PACKAGE

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SUNRISE MOVEMENT GW

Sarah Strader  
Executive Director  
TWO RABBITS

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MOUNTAIN STATE JUSTICE

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Autumn Long  
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CEO PIPE ORGANS/ GOLDEN PONDS FARM

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Thomas Content  
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CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD OF WISCONSIN

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MILWAUKEE RIVERKEEPER

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MT. HOREB CITIZENS AGAINST WATER FLUORIDATION

Zachary Yiannias  
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SUNRISE MOVEMENT BROOKFIELD

Helgaleena Healingline  
Associate Director  
WHITE RABBIT GROVE
Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy and Leader Schumer,

We write to request that Congress protects the most vulnerable Americans from the danger and insecurity that results from utility shut-offs by putting a nationwide moratorium on essential utility service disconnections until the COVID-19 pandemic threat has passed and the country’s economy has stabilized as part of the next COVID-19 package. A moratorium would provide important temporary relief during this COVID-19 crisis, but as we seek to recover from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we need to invest in addressing the systemic issues driving unjust utility burdens across America.

While the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act included important paycheck and eviction protection measures, it failed to ensure that families will continue to have access to the basic utility services—including electricity, water and wastewater, heating, telecommunications, and internet—essential to survive during this health crisis.

Utility services are especially critical for public health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. Water service ensures that Americans can handwash and disinfect surfaces necessary to slow and stop the coronavirus outbreak. Electricity is necessary for families to turn on the lights and have refrigerated food to eat. Internet access is essential for many employees to be able to work from home and for children who are out of school to access educational resources. Millions working service jobs on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic are facing disconnection.

Utility insecurity is felt by low-wealth Americans, rural and tribal communities and people of color. Newly unemployed Americans are facing disconnection because of loss of income. Vulnerable elderly populations need electricity to run life-saving medical equipment, keep medications refrigerated, and keep their homes at livable temperatures. These are the communities that need congressional protections the most.

We applaud the many utilities and that have taken voluntary steps to prevent disconnections during this crisis. Many states have also issued orders to keep utility services connected.
For all of us to get through this together we need to have a national policy with clear standards that utilities can follow, and ensure that no family is left behind in the patchwork of policies. The federal government should provide utilities with support for operations as well as customers, especially in light of declining utility revenues caused by unemployment, small business shutdowns, and rising poverty.

Congress cannot simply give low-wealth Americans a short-term reprieve on disconnections without ensuring them adequate time to recover from job losses and other coronavirus impacts. Families should not be condemned to a growing and unpayable utility burden that comes due at the end of this national emergency. We must ensure that these essential services are maintained when the COVID-19 pandemic threat has passed and the country’s economy has stabilized.

We ask that the nationwide moratorium last for at least six months beyond the end date of the national state of emergency to allow for a sufficient grace period for families to recover from unemployment and other coronavirus-related impacts. All families whose services have already been cut off should be safely reconnected. All late fees and bill payments for low-wealth families should be forgiven through the end of the grace period. Congress must provide federal support to make this possible.

The COVID-19 outbreak has highlighted the systemic problems of poverty and utility insecurity in the United States and its disparate impact on low-wealth communities and communities of color. When Congress enacts legislation to speed the economic recovery of our country, it should prioritize permanently increasing the economic security for low-wealth individuals. Priority should go to building infrastructure to support distributed renewable energy, safe water systems, and broadband access in rural areas.

Now is the time for our country to provide relief for the communities that are being most harmed by the COVID-19 pandemic. We look forward to working with you to find a workable solution for all families in this difficult time.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Brenda L. Lawrence
Member of Congress
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Patty Murray
United States Senator

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

Albio Sires
Member of Congress

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress
Ron Wyden  
United States Senator

Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress

Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator

Gwen Moore  
Member of Congress

Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator

James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator

Mike Doyle  
Member of Congress

Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator

Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress

Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator

Jerry McNerney  
Member of Congress

Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

Donna E. Shalala
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress

Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress

Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress

Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

Tulsi Gabbard
Member of Congress

Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress
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Dr. Robert R. Redfield  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Director Redfield:

We write to request that you use your authority under section 361 of the Public Health Services Act to issue a nationwide moratorium on drinking water shutoffs, because access to clean water is essential to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.¹

With over 7 million coronavirus cases in the United States and over 200,000 lives lost, the coronavirus remains a major public health threat in this country.² Numerous public health officials, including yourself and other officials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), have stated that access to clean water is essential to stopping the spread of the coronavirus. For example, in March CDC recommended washing hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.³ In addition, during a hearing before the Committee on Oversight and Reform on coronavirus preparedness and response, you testified about the importance of people washing their hands in order to stop the spread of the disease.⁴ Public health officials continue to recommend hand washing to prevent and slow the spread of the coronavirus.⁵ In fact, you reiterated last month that hand washing, along with mask-wearing and social distancing, could bring the virus “under control.”⁶

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¹ 42 U.S.C. § 264.  
At this crucial time, there is no national moratorium on water shutoffs to ensure that every American has access to clean water. Although several states acted at the beginning of the pandemic to implement moratoriums on water shutoffs, many of these state moratoriums have expired or will expire in the coming weeks. For example, moratoriums have recently expired in Illinois, North Carolina, and Maryland. As a result of these and other expirations of water shutoff moratoriums, over half of the United States’ population is currently at risk for water disconnection.\[7\]

Just as CDC acted to ensure that Americans are protected from evictions, access to water in each person’s home is also essential to preventing the spread of the coronavirus and allow people infected with the virus to isolate without the need to come in contact with other persons in order to bathe or drink water.\[8\] For the above reasons, the Subcommittee urges you to order a nationwide moratorium on water shutoffs under section 361 of the Public Health Services Act.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact Subcommittee staff at (202) 225-5051. Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Harley Rouda
Chairman
Subcommittee on Environment

Rashida Tlaib
Vice Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Environment

cc: The Honorable Mark Green, Ranking Member
    Subcommittee on Environment

---


Dr. Robert R. Redfield  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, GA 30329

October 21, 2020

Request for a Nationwide Water Shutoff Moratorium

Dear Director Redfield:

On behalf of our members and supporters, we, the undersigned 121 organizations, call on you to take urgent action to stop water shutoffs nationwide to help protect people from Covid-19. We ask that you use your authority under Section 361 of the Public Health Services Act to impose a nationwide moratorium on water service disconnections for nonpayment during the Covid-19 pandemic with safe service restoration for all households previously disconnected.

Water is critical for disinfection and sanitation to control the spread of Covid-19. One of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s top recommendations to help stop the spread of disease is thorough and frequent handwashing, but without access to water, people cannot follow this simple — yet crucial — advice. Strikingly, research from We the People of Detroit identified a direct correlation between zip codes with highest rates of water shutoffs and the highest COVID-19 cases in Detroit, and found a substantial, statistically significant effect of water insecurity on psychological distress (see appendix).

Water shutoffs pose a real threat to human health. Right now, thousands of people could be living without running water in their homes; they do not have water to drink, bathe, clean and disinfect, wash their hands, or flush their toilets. Households that have their water shut off will be even more vulnerable to the rampant spread of the coronavirus endangering the health and safety of entire communities. Seniors, pregnant women, young children and people with diabetes and other illnesses are especially vulnerable.

As of October 1, less than half of the country was protected from water shutoffs by a state or local moratorium, as more than 180 local and state protections have expired. An estimated 177 million people are not protected under a local or state water shutoff moratorium, and hundreds of thousands of people are at risk of water shutoff across the country because they have fallen behind on their water bills (see appendix).

Now is the time to act to help prevent this deepening public health disaster by issuing a nationwide water shutoff moratorium.

Sincerely,
National
Action Center on Race and the Economy
American Rivers
Campaign for Lead Free Water
Center for Biological Diversity
Corporate Accountability
Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul
Earthjustice
Food & Water Action
Friends of the Earth U.S.
Greenpeace US
Justice Action Mobilization Network
Kairos Center for Religions, Rights and Social Justice
League of Conservation Voters
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund Inc. (LDF)
National Coalition for Legislation on Affordable Water
National Welfare Rights Union
Natural Resources Defense Council
Nuclear Information and Resource Service
Oil Change International
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Progressive Democrats of America
Public Citizen
Recode.org
River Network
Sisters of Charity Federation
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
The Democracy Collaborative

Regional
Alliance for the Great Lakes
Citizens United for Renewable Energy (CURE)
Earth Ethics, Inc.
For Love of Water (FLOW)
Freshwater Future
Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation
Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, New Windsor, NY
Ursulines of the Roman Union - Eastern Province
We the People of Detroit

Alabama
Alabama Arise
Cahaba River Society
Dynamite Hill-Smithfield Community Land Trust
SWEET Alabama

California
Community Water Center
Lady Freethinker
MLK Coalition of Greater Los Angeles
North County Watch
Restore the Delta
Social Eco Education (SEE-LA)

Colorado
San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council

Florida
Nature Coast Conservation

Illinois
Clean Power Lake County
Faith In Place Action Fund
Metropolitan Planning Council
Prairie Rivers Network
She Votes Illinois

Indiana
Citizens Action Coalition of IN
Iowa
Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
Iowa Unitarian Universalist Witness/Advocacy Network

Louisiana
350 New Orleans

Maryland
Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility
Cleanwater linganore Inc.
Homeless Persons Representation Project, Inc.
Prince George's County Peace & Justice Coalition
Public Justice Center

Massachusetts
Fore River Residents Against the Compressor Station
Old Stone Mill Center Zero Waste Maker Space
Take Back the Grid

Michigan
48217 Community and Environmental Health Organization
Detroit Jews for Justice
Detroit Metro United Church of Christ Social Justice Team
Flint Rising
James and Grace Lee Boggs Center
Michigan Coalition for Human Rights
Michigan Welfare Rights Organization
NMEAC
People's Water Board Coalition
The Original United Citizens of Southwest Detroit
Title Track
Water You Fighting For?
Minnesota
Community Power
Cooperative Energy Futures
COPAL MN

New Jersey
Coalition Against Pilgrim Pipeline - NJ
Franciscan Response to Fossil Fuel
Indivisible NJ5
Lutherans Engaging in Advocacy Ministry NJ
MoveOn.org Hoboken
New Jersey Tenants Organization
NJ State Industrial Union Council
Occupy Bergen County
People Demanding Action
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Sussex County
WATERSPIRIT

New Mexico
Common Ground Community Trust
Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety
New Energy Economy
We Are One River

New York
Center for Elder Law & Justice
Church Women United in New York State
Environmental Advocates of NY
Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project
Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement
Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo, Inc.
Long Island Progressive Coalition
Metro NY Catholic Climate Movement
New York Communities for Change
New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG)
North American Climate, Conservation and Environment (NACCE)
NYC H2O
Partnership for the Public Good
Save the Sound
Seneca Lake Guardian
Stop the Algonquin Pipeline Expansion
Western New York Law Center

North Carolina
River Guardian Foundation

Oregon
Portland Citizens for Lead-free Drinking Water
Rogue Climate

Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania Utility Law Project, on behalf of our low income clients
Water rights awareness of Pennsylvania

West Virginia
Mountain State Justice, Inc.

Wisconsin
Milwaukee Riverkeeper
Milwaukee Water Commons
Appendix

Research


Water Shutoff Moratoria

- According to Food & Water Action's live tracker of water shutoff moratoria:
  - As of October 1, 2020, 46 percent of the country – 151 million people – remains protected under a water shutoff moratorium. This is down from a high of two-thirds of the U.S. population that had been protected.
    - An estimated 177 million people are not protected under a local or state shutoff moratorium.
    - One in five people nationally have lost protections from water shutoffs because of expiring local and state moratoria — 63 million people have lost protections.
    - At least 182 moratoria, including nine comprehensive statewide orders, have expired.
  - Over the month of September alone, an additional 32 local and state moratoria expired, affecting 6.5 million people.
  - By November 2, only five states could have a comprehensive water shutoff moratorium in place: California, New Jersey, New York, Vermont and Washington State.

- NRDC - “Congress & States Must Protect Water Access During COVID-19”
Shutoff Data

- In Florida, Orlando and Jacksonville shut off hundreds of households a day from water and power in July and August. Orlando alone had 15,000 customers who were eligible for shut off, and in Jacksonville, JEA had disconnected 22,000 customers since July 10, as of October 8.
- In South Carolina, Charleston shut off water service to 3,137 households in the last two weeks of August, and another 4,000 customers were at risk of shutoff as of September 1.
- In Tennessee, Memphis, 9,000 homes were disconnected from utilities on August 24, the first day of resumed shutoffs, and around 31,000 customers were at risk of being cut off.
- In Texas, Laredo said that 17,000 households were behind on their bills and could be shut off from water, as of September 3 - that's nearly 20% of its customers.
- In Illinois, Aqua Illinois sent out 15,120 water shutoff notices in August - that's 20% of its customers. The state ICC moratorium expired September 1 (source: docket information).
- In Arizona, Mesa had 9,240 customers and Scottsdale had 1,422 customers who were behind on their bills and could face water shutoff as of September 1.
- In Alabama, 12,000 customers of Birmingham Water Works were facing shutoff as of October 14.
- In Pennsylvania, as of September, regulated water utilities reported 106,766 residential customers were at risk of disconnection; the PUC moratorium ends November 9 (source: docket information).
- In North Carolina, 146,704 residential customers became eligible for water shutoff in July (source: docket information).
Mary Grant  
Public Water for All Campaign  
1616 P Street NW  
Washington, DC 20036  

Dear Ms. Grant:

Thank you for your letter requesting a moratorium on water service disconnections for nonpayment during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

With thousands of personnel supporting the pandemic response, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is at the forefront of the federal government’s efforts to control the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. We have spent decades fighting epidemics and pandemics, which gives us the experience needed to mitigate the impact of this virus on the American public.

We understand the critical need for clean water in all communities. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, CDC recommends washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html).

In situations where water is not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in many situations. However, be aware that sanitizers do not get rid of all types of germs. Hand sanitizers may not be as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy. Hand sanitizers might not remove harmful chemicals from hands like pesticides and heavy metals (https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html).

Even under circumstances where clean water is not available, evidence indicates that hygiene practices (for example, washing hands) using unsafe water are beneficial to reducing the spread of disease and are better than not washing at all. When access to safe water is poor, CDC recommends using unsafe water in the same manner as safe water for hygiene practices, to clean hands before eating, after using the toilet, and at other key times (https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/lde/index.html).

CDC provides the agency’s most up-to-date COVID-19 information, resources, and guidance at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html.
Thank you for your interest in this ongoing response. We appreciate your support as we work together to fight COVID-19. CDC remains committed to protecting the American public during this pandemic. Please share a copy of this response with the co-signers of your letter.

Sincerely,

Robert R. Redfield, MD
Director, CDC