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Biden–Harris Administration Selects Texas Southern University to Receive \$50,000,000 to Fund Environmental Justice Projects Across Region 6

Grantmaker selected to reduce barriers to federal funds and issue thousands of environmental justice grants over the next three years

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DALLAS TEXAS (December 22, 2023) – As part of President Biden’s Investing in America agenda, the Biden-Harris Administration announced the Texas Southern University has been selected to serve as Regional Grantmaker that will receive \$50,000,000 under EPA’s Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Grantmaking program that was created by President Biden’s Inflation Reduction Act, the largest investment in climate action in history. This new grant program, which will make it easier for small community-based organizations to access federal environmental justice funding, responds to community feedback about the need to reduce barriers to federal funds and improve the efficiency of the awards process to ensure communities that have long faced underinvestment can access the benefits of the largest climate investment in history. Communities will be able to apply to Texas Southern University’s Bullard Center for Environmental and Climate Justice for a subgrant to fund a range of different environmental project activities, including (but not limited to) small local clean ups, local emergency preparedness and disaster resiliency programs, environmental workforce development programs for local

jobs reducing greenhouse gas emissions, fenceline air quality and asthma related projects, healthy homes programs, and projects addressing illegal dumping.

President Biden is delivering the most ambitious environmental justice agenda in our nation's history. Vice President Kamala Harris and EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan were joined by Dr. Robert Bullard, a Distinguished Professor of Urban Planning and Environmental Policy at Texas Southern University to announce the historic Grantmaker awards.

"Every person has a right to drink clean water, breathe clean air, and live in a community that is healthy and safe," **said Vice President Kamala Harris.** "For too long, however, low-income communities, immigrant communities, Native communities, and communities of color have endured disproportionate levels of air, water, and soil pollution. That is why President Joe Biden and I have put equity at the center of our nation's largest investment in climate in history. Today's announcement puts that commitment into action by ensuring critical resources to fund environmental justice projects across the country reach the organizations that know their communities best."

"For years, community advocates have been calling for federal support and resources to help address our country's most pressing environmental justice concerns," **said EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan.** "Thanks to President Biden and Vice President Harris' leadership, we're responding to these calls by removing barriers that have traditionally held communities and applicants back from accessing these historic investments in America. Together, in partnership with these Grantmakers, we are taking a giant step toward a future where every person in America has equal opportunity to breathe clean air, drink clean water, and live a healthy, productive life."

"I am grateful to see the Biden-Harris Administration support and recognize the importance of strengthening regional partners like Texas Southern University to help advance environmental justice goals," **said Deputy Regional Administrator Stacey Dwyer.** "Texas Southern University, with Dr. Bullard's leadership, became a pioneer for environmental quality not just in Texas but in the nation. With decades of bringing awareness to environmental quality and for fighting to overcome local pollution obstacles, EPA is proud to call Texas Southern University a Regional Grantmaker. We look forward to working with Texas Southern University and Dr. Bullard to bring federal resources to impacted communities and to help address the region's most pressing environmental concerns."

"I am happy to say Texas Southern University is the HBCU that served as the 'launching pad' for my environmental justice career way back in 1979—before EJ had a name or initials. And today, 44 years later, TSU was selected to serve as a Regional Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Grantmaker," **says Center Director and Professor Dr. Robert D. Bullard, who is often referred to as the "father of environmental justice."**

Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee (TX-18) said:

"Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee is pleased to announce with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) a major \$50 million Environmental Justice Program Grant to Texas Southern University (TSU). TSU is the academic home of Professor Robert D. Bullard, who is known as the 'Father of Environmental Justice.' Dr. Bullard's groundbreaking work and pioneering research regarding communities of color expanded beyond academia to establish environmental justice as a national priority.

This unique grant we are announcing resulted from the work of many of us as Members of Congress on environmental justice issues. Specifically, this grant resulted from the work of the United States Congress and the Biden-Harris Administration on the Inflation Reduction Act, which is the largest investment in climate action relief in our history. I worked on the Inflation Reduction Act as a member of the House Budget Committee.

Through my 18th Congressional District Office, I led in efforts to directly engage the EPA on frontline environmental challenges facing residents of my district. I called a community meeting that brought all sides to a discussion on the creosote contamination of Fifth Ward and Kashmere Gardens, which led to my work for a cancer study of the impacted area. The study resulted in three reports each revealing a new cancer cluster involving residents of the Fifth Ward and Kashmere Gardens area.

I applaud the work of EPA Administrator Regan and his team for positively receiving communications from my office on the cancer clusters and their effort to focus energy and resources on the environmental problems faced by at-risk communities like Fifth Ward, Kashmere Gardens, and the larger Northeast community along with other communities in the 18th Congressional District. Under Administrator Regan and his team's leadership, EPA is bringing this grant opportunity to the City of Houston.

Throughout my legislative and representational work, I have worked closely with the EPA on addressing environmental concerns impacting communities in my Congressional District. I welcome today's funding and will work with the Administrator and his team to bring this grant opportunity to the City of Houston."

EPA Grantmakers will work in collaboration with [EPA's Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights](#) to issue subgrants to community-based nonprofit organizations and other eligible organizations representing disadvantaged communities. As a Grantmaker, Texas Southern University will design comprehensive application and submission processes, award environmental justice subgrants, implement tracking and reporting systems, and provide resources and support to communities. The subgrants are expected to become available by summer of 2024.

EPA has selected, the Texas Southern University to receive \$50,000,000 as a National Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Grantmaker to provide additional support, coordination, and oversight to the subgrantees, applicants, and the Regional Grantmakers across the southern part of the country. The Bullard Center for Environmental and Climate Justice ("Bullard Center") at Texas Southern University (TSU)—in partnership with Achieving Community Tasks Successfully (ACTS), a community-based nonprofit organization—will serve as a Regional Grantmaker (RGM) for the purpose of distributing funds to CBOs that are addressing environmental justice issues in disadvantaged and underserved communities. The Bullard Center RGM program builds on decades of experience, expertise and trust earned the past three decades in operating centers, consortia, and collaboratives engaged in regranting to EJ CBOs.

Grantmakers are expected to begin opening competitions and awarding subgrants by summer 2024. Community-based nonprofit organizations and other eligible organizations seeking subgrant funding will be able to apply for subgrants through three concurrent tiers offered by the Grantmakers. Tier One will consist of grants for \$150,000 for assessment, Tier Two will consist of grants for \$250,000 for planning, and Tier Three will consist of grants for \$350,000 for project development. In addition, \$75,000 will be available for capacity-constrained community-based organizations through a noncompetitive process during Tier

One. Each Grantmaker will design and implement a distribution program best suited for their region and communities.

The Grantmakers program is part of the [Federal Interagency Thriving Communities Network](#) and delivers on the Biden-Harris Administration's [Justice40 Initiative](#) which set the goal that 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized by underinvestment and overburdened by pollution. Grantmakers will work in collaboration with the [Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers \(EJ TCTACs\)](#) to create a robust support network to assist eligible entities when applying.

Learn more about the [Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Grantmakers](#).

Background

From day one of their administration, President Biden and Vice President Harris have made achieving environmental justice a top priority. In August 2022, President Biden signed the Inflation Reduction Act into law, creating the largest investment in environmental and climate justice in U.S. history. EPA received \$3 billion in total to award grants and fund related technical assistance to benefit disadvantaged communities.

EPA has since launched and expanded innovative programs to provide more support than ever before to communities that unjustly bear the burdens of environmental harm and pollution. This includes the \$177 million for the creation of [16 EJ TCTACs](#) in partnership with the U.S. Department of Energy to remove barriers to federal resources and help communities pursue funding opportunities like those made available through President Biden's Investing in America Agenda.

EPA [announced nearly \\$128 million](#) to fund 186 projects across the country that advance environmental justice as part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda. The organizations, which EPA has selected through its [Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem Solving Cooperative Agreement](#) and [Environmental Justice Government-to-Government](#) programs, will use the funds to ensure disadvantaged communities that have historically suffered from underinvestment have access to clean air and water and climate resilience solutions in alignment with the Biden-Harris Administration's Justice40 Initiative.

EPA also announced [approximately \\$2 billion in funding](#) available to support community-driven projects that deploy clean energy, strengthen climate resilience, and build capacity for communities to tackle environmental and climate justice challenges last month. The [Community Change Grants](#) are the single largest investment in environmental justice going directly to communities in history, and will advance collaborative efforts to achieve a healthier, safer, and more prosperous future for all.

[Learn more about environmental justice at EPA.](#)

For up-to-date information on when subgrants will be available, subscribe to the Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights' listserv by sending a blank email to: join-epa-ej@lists.epa.gov. Follow OEJECR on X (formerly Twitter): [@EPAEnvJustice](#).

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