

DC Environmental Network

**32BJ SEIU · Anacostia RIVERKEEPER · Alice Ferguson Foundation
Anacostia Watershed Society · Audubon Naturalist Society · Capitol Hill Energy Coop
Casey Trees · Center for Biological Diversity · Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Chesapeake Climate Action Network · Clean Water Action · Coalition for Smarter Growth
DC Farm to School Network · DC Fiscal Policy Institute · DC Greenworks
DC Lead Poison Elimination & Healthy Housing Adv. Committee · Earthjustice
Friends of the Earth · Friends of Rock Creek's Environment · Global Green USA
GreenHOME/Greenspace NCR · Groundwork Anacostia River DC, Inc. · groSolar
Ingleside at Rock Creek Retirement · Institute for Market Transformation · Maggio Roofing
McMillan Park Committee · Mt. Pleasant Solar Coop · Natural Resources Defense Council
Parents for Nontoxic Alternatives · Pfeiffer's Hardware
Politics and Prose Climate Action Project · Potomac Riverkeeper
Potomac River Swim for the Environment · Sierra Club · Sol Systems · Solar Solution llc.
Surfrider Foundation · Washington Parks & People**

May 10, 2010

Hon. Vincent C. Gray, Chairman
District of Columbia Council
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Suite 506
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Chairman Gray:

We are writing to express our concerns with current budget shortfalls that are de-prioritizing the funding of programs which protect the air we breathe and the water we drink as well as the jobs of the future. Our organizational memberships collectively combined represent thousands of District residents who care deeply about the health and welfare of citizens in each and every ward. We believe these cuts to important environmental programs put District residents' health and prosperity at risk.

We also believe it is the protection of the environment that holds the greatest hope for the economic growth of the District of Columbia and surrounding region. As you read this letter programs for the development of solar power in District neighborhoods and the creation of green roofs have already produced jobs for District residents. Not only have jobs been created but the District has started to curb the amount of damaging carbon emissions and polluted stormwater that poison our communities and globe.

Some of the specific concerns different environmental (and other) organizations and businesses have with Mayor Fenty's FY2011 proposed budget:

- DC Sustainable Energy Utility: Mayor Fenty has proposed to transfer dedicated funding away from the operation of the DC Sustainable Energy Utility. The Sustainable Energy Utility (SEU) is a program created by the City Council to accomplish high priority objectives for DC residents and businesses including green job creation, home weatherization, renewable energy installation and energy efficiency improvements. The proposal decreases funds to the SEU by 87%, effectively disabling it in the first year of its operation. It even slashes by 83% the Pepco energy efficiency program meant to sustain our clean energy programs until the SEU is up and running. Funds must not be diverted and should be fully restored.

- Clean Energy Programs: Mayor Fenty has proposed reducing millions of dollars of funds for other clean energy programs. Anya Schoolman, president of the Mt. Pleasant Solar Coop says the proposed budget “slashes proposed funding for solar rebates in half from the level set by the DC Council.” The proposed budget effectively cripples the District’s plans for reducing the use and cost of energy and the generation of greenhouse gases, and of stimulating green collar job creation in this important new industry. Funds should be restored to solar rebate levels set by the DC Council.



“We are hoping through our coordinated effort to remind the Council that protection of environmental programs can no longer be considered a luxury but must be treated as the priority that may very well be the key to economic success and prosperity.”

- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP): The mayor’s proposed FY 2011 local spending of \$6.8 million is an 18 percent drop from fiscal year 2010 and a 46 percent cut since FY 2008. Meanwhile, more DC families are struggling to pay bills: According to the Public Service Commission, the number of DC households that had their electricity shut off due to nonpayment was 43 percent higher in 2009 than in 2007, and the number that had their gas shut off was 29 percent higher in 2009 than in 2007. The DC Council should add \$4 million to LIHEAP local funding, restoring the local funding level to FY 2009.



- Anacostia River Cleanup Fund: The Mayor's FY2011 budget uses the Anacostia River Cleanup Fund - proceeds from the new and successful 5-cent bag fee - for existing street services, instead of the new restoration and education efforts for which it was intended, as described in the law. This is a violation of public trust and a step backward in protecting our rivers and environment. Funds must not be diverted and should be fully restored to improve the Anacostia River.

- Metro Funding: Metro's original proposed FY2011 budget included horrendous service cuts. The District of Columbia withheld a commitment to increase funding over last year *to prevent those cuts*. After the public hearing process concluded, Metro’s Interim General Manager proposed increasing the jurisdictions' funding by a total of \$26 million and "borrowing" \$30 million from the Capital Budget to avert most of the service reductions. The District of Columbia should: publicly commit now to providing its \$12.9

million share of the proposed increase; prevent still remaining detrimental service cuts; and resolve to reach a 5-year regional funding agreement that will meet Metro's capital needs.

- Urban Forestry Administration: As a requirement of the city's storm water management permit requirements, Mayor Fenty on one hand has committed to a 40% tree canopy goal for the District yet has not adequately funded the 8600 tree plantings a year necessary to meet this goal. Trees are essential to the health of the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers, important in the fight against global warming, and perhaps most important – add life and vitality to neighborhoods in all Wards of the District. If DC is to keep its title of “City of Trees,” funding for this work must be provided, be it in the Urban Forestry Administration for Street and Park Trees, or to DDOE for trees located in other areas. Funds should be secured to plant more trees and begin a serious effort to meet Mayor Fenty's own 40% tree canopy goal.
- Lead in Drinking Water: For over a year under DDOE's leadership, a stakeholders group and a consultant have been working to design an independent study of lead levels in DC's drinking water that was requested two years ago by Councilmember's Graham and Cheh. Now with budget pressures Mayor Fenty did not appropriate the \$200,000 needed to begin this important work. In order to avoid the threat of new problems in the next decade, the District needs to collect the data necessary to protect children from lead exposure. Fund the next stage of the independent study of lead levels in DC's drinking water.
- District Department of the Environment: Mayor Fenty has proposed cutting the District Department of the Environment's (DDOE) local budget by \$3,151,350, freezing 24 vacant positions and relying too much on stimulus funds to keep the agency moving forward. These cuts are the highest percentage cuts of all the main agencies and puts DDOE at risk in future years. Funds must not be diverted and should be restored as much as possible.

We are hoping through our coordinated effort to remind the Council that protection of environmental programs can no longer be considered a luxury but must be treated as the priority that may very well be the key to economic success and prosperity. We urge you as you go through the budget process to take extra care to protect those programs that are really all about our future.

We look forward to working with you. Feel free to contact us at cweiss@dcen.net or call 202-518-8782.

Sincerely,

Chris Weiss
Director
DC Environmental Network

Ed Lazere
Executive Director
DC Fiscal Policy Institute

Erich Pica
President
Friends of the Earth

Tracy Bowen
Executive Director
Alice Ferguson Foundation

Anya Schoolman
President
Mt. Pleasant Solar Coop

Peter Ensign LEED AP
Executive Director
DC Greenworks

Diane M. Cameron
Conservation Program
Director
Audubon Naturalist Society of
the Central Atlantic States,
Inc.

Mike Barrette
Director - Solar Roof Project
Capitol Hill Energy Coop

Atta Kiarash
Vice President
Solar Solution llc.

Ilana Lipsett
Political Director, Capital
Area District
32BJ SEIU

Dennis Chestnut
Executive Director
Groundwork Anacostia River
DC, Inc.

Paul F. Walker, Ph.D.
Director, Security and
Sustainability
Global Green USA

John Macgregor
Politics and Prose Climate
Action Project

Steve Coleman
Director & President
Washington Parks & People

Mark Buscaino
Executive Director
Casey Trees

Cliff Majersik, LEED AP
Executive Director
Institute for Market
Transformation (IMT)

Jennifer Chavez
Staff Attorney
Earthjustice

Andy Fellows
Chesapeake Regional Director
Clean Water Action

Eric Durland
Program Coordinator
Friends of Rock Creek's
Environment - FORCE

Doug Siglin
Federal Affairs Director
Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Yuri Horwitz
President & CEO
Sol Systems

Mike Tidwell
Executive Director
Chesapeake Climate Action
Network

Julie Lawson
Chair, DC Chapter
Surfrider Foundation

Scott Siegal
President
Maggio Roofing

Patty Rose
Executive Director
GreenHOME/Greenspace
NCR

Todd Pfeiffer
Owner
Pfeiffer's Hardware

Jon Devine
Senior Attorney
Natural Resources Defense
Council

Tim Grahl
Regional Sales Representative
groSolar

Dottie Yunger
Anacostia Riverkeeper and
Executive Director
Anacostia Riverkeeper

Stewart Schwartz
Executive Director
Coalition for Smarter Growth

Yanna Lambrinidou
Ralph Scott
Parents for Nontoxic
Alternatives

Brent Bolin
Director of Advocacy
Anacostia Watershed Society

Gwyn Jones
Chair
Sierra Club, Washington, DC
Chapter

Ed Merrifield
Potomac Riverkeeper

Dr. William Clotworthy
Green Committee
Ingleside at Rock Creek
Retirement

Andrea Northup
Coordinator
D.C. Farm to School Network

Linda Lewis, RN
Vice-Chair
DC Lead Poison Elimination
& Healthy Housing Adv.
Committee

Cheryl Wagner
Potomac River Swim for the
Environment

Tony Norman
Chairman
McMillan Park Committee

Bill Snape
Senior Counsel
Center for Biological
Diversity

Cc; DC Council, Mayor Fenty