



ENVIRONMENTAL  
ADVOCATES OF NEW YORK

# SUPPORTS



Key to Legislative Ratings:



Major Benefit



Substantial Benefit



Beneficial

## **S.4407 (SCHNEIDERMAN, THOMPSON) A.8432-A (GIANARIS, ET AL.)**

### **Summary**

This bill would make it the policy of New York State that all people, regardless of race, culture, religion, income, education level or sexual preference be treated equally with respect to the development and enforcement of environmental policies. The bill declares that it is the basic right of all New Yorkers to live and work in safe, healthful, productive, aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings.

### **Explanation**

All people have the right to fair and equal treatment under environmental law, regardless of social class, and this bill affirms that right by making it the policy of New York State. Language in the bill is similar the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's definition of environmental justice. The bill enhances the EPA's language by predicating the proposed statement of policy on the concept of fairness.

Examples of disproportionate exposure to pollution abound in low-income communities and communities of color. Per A Climate of Change, a 2008 report by the Environmental Justice and Climate Change Initiative, 71 percent of African Americans live in counties in violation of federal air pollution standards compared to 58 percent of whites. Seventy-eight percent of African Americans live within 30 miles of a coal-fired power plant, as compared to 56 percent of non-Hispanic whites.

While a statement of policy will not solve these inequities, by affirming New Yorkers' right to the fair development and enforcement of environmental policies, the Legislature is committing our state to enacting a vision of justice for all.

**Environmental Advocates of New York supports this bill.**

**Memo 37**