

# Black churches show support for Obama environmental plan



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Leaders of the nation's major black churches (L-R) – the Rev. Dr. Earl D. Trent, Jr., the Rev. Dr. Timothy Tee Boddie, the Rev. Jesse V. Bottoms Jr., the Rev. Brian K. Brown, Bishop Carroll A. Baltimore and Bishop James B. Walker – presented over 10,000 pastors' signatures to Congressional Black Caucus members in support of President Obama's Clean Power Plan.

BY SAVANNAH HARRIS  
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NEWS SERVICE

**WASHINGTON** — Leaders of the nation's major black churches — representing nearly 13 million African-American members — presented over 10,000 pastors' signatures to Congressional Black Caucus members in support of President Obama's Clean Power Plan.

The leaders said they are making the effort to push forward the bill, which has a goal to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 32 percent by 2030.

Bishop George Battle, senior bishop of the A.M.E. Zion Church; the Rev. Samuel C. Tolbert Jr., president of the National Baptist Convention of America; and the Rev. Dr. Timothy Tee Boddie, general secretary to the Progressive National Baptist Convention of America, were among the those who presented the signatures to members of the Congressional Black Caucus.

U.S. Rep. Barbara Lee, who represents Oakland, Berkeley and other northern California cities, applauded their effort.

"As faith and community leaders, their commitment to protecting and pre-

serving our fragile planet is greatly needed as we work to address climate change," Lee said in a statement.

Lee said the president's plan and other environmental action must have a positive effect on disadvantaged communities.

"This is truly an issue about justice — environmental justice, economic justice and racial justice. The negative effects of pollution and climate change have disproportionately affected communities of color," she said.

"As we work to reverse climate change, we must all raise our voices together and ensure that the economic opportunities created by the green economy are open to all."

According to caucus members, almost 40 percent of the 6 million Americans living close to coal-fired power plants are people of color, and they are disproportionately African-American. Pollutants released from those plants have led to high rates of asthma and respiratory issues within nearby communities.

In the Triad area of North Carolina, the issue of air pollution and African-Americans has been raised. The N.C. NAACP announced in June that it is

launching a civil rights investigation into the disproportionate public health hazard that fracking and coal ash pollution pose to poor communities and people of color in Stokes County.

The NAACP investigation is specifically targeting environmental racism in Stokes County, but the entire state is on notice. The coal waste contamination and fracking tests in North Carolina have drawn nationwide attention and concern.

According to President Obama and his supporters, his plan would decrease premature deaths from emissions by nearly 90 percent and asthma attacks in children by 90,000 by 2030.

The Rev. Jesse Bottoms, vice president of the National Baptist Convention, echoed concerns about the impact of pollutants on African Americans.

"Environmental concerns are not abstractions for African-Americans,"

Bottoms said. "They are real, and they affect us in very real ways, particularly our children and seniors."

According to the White House, the number of Americans with asthma has more than doubled over the last 30 years, and severe droughts, wildfires and the rising sea level are affecting communities nationwide.

Of the 15 warmest years recorded, 14 of them have occurred since 2000, with the warmest year being 2014. Children and

the elderly, the sick and the poor are most at risk from effects of climate change.

Bishop Carroll Baltimore of the Global United Fellowship said, "No one should have to live in dirty air that makes them sick, but it's especially unfair that our least fortunate and most vulnerable communities—our children and those living in poverty and with lower incomes—have to suffer even more than the rest."

Chronicle staff contributed to this report.

## Community Kitchen receives grant to help underemployed

SPECIAL TO  
THE CHRONICLE

Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina is pleased to announce a \$12,000 grant from the Bank of America Charitable Foundation for its Triad Community Kitchen (TCK) culinary training program. TCK empowers the formerly un- or underemployed with basic cooking skills, placing them in local jobs.

"We are very thankful for support from funders like the Bank of America Charitable Foundation," said Jeff Bacon, Executive Chef and Executive Director of TCK. "Many of our students would have no ability to pay for job training without our scholarships. Bank of America's commitment to local workforce development helps people get a second chance and be productive members of the community."

TCK has graduated 510 people since opening in 2006. As a program of Second Harvest Food Bank, TCK students and

staff "give back" by preparing ready-to-heat meals that are distributed to emergency feeding programs across the Food Bank's 18 counties.

The program has recently expanded to include a full-service, upscale restaurant in Winston-Salem called Providence Restaurant. TCK Providence Catering, which launched five years ago and has a long, successful track record, has also grown and moved to the restaurant site—the new Doubletree by Hilton on University Parkway.

Triad Community Kitchen (TCK) provides culinary and life skills training to unemployed and underemployed individuals and works to assist graduates in finding full-time employment. More than 500 people have graduated from the program in the past nine years. The one-year job retention rate is 67 percent, more than double the national average of similar programs. To learn more, visit [www.hungernwnc.org](http://www.hungernwnc.org).

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