

EPA: Announces \$400,000 for Milwaukee and Madison to fund environmental justice initiatives

Posted on Tuesday, Jul 13, 2021

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

CHICAGO (July 13, 2021) — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today announced that it will provide \$200,000 each for Milwaukee and Madison for Environmental Justice (EJ) initiatives through funds allocated to EPA under the American Rescue Plan (ARP). In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress designated this funding for grants, contracts, and other agency activities that identify and address disproportionate environmental or public health harms and risks in underserved communities through a range of local initiatives.

“These initiatives in Milwaukee and Madison will help areas that are overburdened with pollution,” **said EPA Region 5 Acting Administrator Cheryl Newton.** “Advancing environmental justice is part of EPA’s core mission of protecting human health and the environment in all communities.”

“This federal funding from EPA will help support great work being done in Madison and Milwaukee on solutions to local COVID-19 public health issues,” **said U.S Senator Tammy Baldwin.** “I know President Biden and EPA Administrator Regan are committed to helping our state address racial disparities in health outcomes and this investment in Wisconsin shows that they support us and the work we are doing at the local level.”

EPA announced \$200,000 in funding to the City of Milwaukee for outreach and education about indoor air quality through a Healthy People, Homes and Neighborhood campaign. The campaign to predominately African American and Latinx neighborhoods will help to distribute information about COVID-19, safe disinfectants, low-cost methods for controlling home energy use and ways to

prevent exposure to lead, mold and other contaminants. The project will increase underserved residents' awareness of how to maintain a healthy home environment and how to access more resources to protect against COVID-19.

"Milwaukee is committed to be a healthier, safer, and more sustainable community. By directly addressing racial disparities, we can improve the lives of Milwaukee residents who are most vulnerable," **Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett said.** "This environmental justice grant is a welcome addition to our efforts."

"Communities of color in Milwaukee have experienced health, education, and economic disparities that were only magnified during the pandemic. Now, we must make conscious efforts to fight these inequities and secure equity for our residents," **said U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore.** "With this environmental justice grant for the City of Milwaukee's Healthy People, Homes and Neighborhoods program, we can empower residents with the tools and knowledge to keep their communities healthy and safe and protect their homes from environmental hazards."

EPA is also providing \$200,000 in funding to the City of Madison for public education, training, and an emergency planning program related to the impacts of COVID-19 on low-income individuals, non-English speaking populations, and racial and ethnic minority populations in two neighborhood clusters located on the Southwest and Northeast side of Madison. The key objective of this program, Intervene Against COVID-19, is to reduce transmission of COVID-19 by increasing community knowledge of prevention, transmission, treatment, and community resources as well as emergency preparedness. To assist with implementation of the education and planning program, participants will receive masks and hand sanitizers, in addition to EPA-approved household disinfectants, to protect against COVID-19 in these communities.

"The COVID pandemic has exacerbated public health inequities in our community," **said Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway.** "We are grateful for this grant from the EPA to work with our community partners to expand community health education in areas that need it most."

"I applaud the EPA for using funds from the American Rescue Plan to address health disparities in the City of Madison," **said U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan.** "This investment will not only reduce the transmission of COVID-19 in high-risk areas, but ensure we prioritize an equitable solution to future public health and environmental crises."

Moving forward, EPA will also work to award an additional \$50 million provided under the ARP for enhanced air quality monitoring, including plans to use a portion of these funds to solicit proposals from community groups, state, local and tribal air agencies to conduct monitoring of pollutants of greatest concern in communities with health outcome disparities. Funding currently being distributed totals approximately \$2.8 million for 14 EJ-focused projects, including the ones in Milwaukee and Madison.

EPA is assisting under-resourced communities by quickly getting out ARP funding to leverage important programs that improve air quality, drinking water, revitalization of brownfields, diesel emissions from buses in low income communities and communities of color. Under EPA's State Environmental Justice Cooperative Agreement (SEJCA) program, the agency is awarding its first competitive grants focusing directly on the unequal impacts the COVID-19 pandemic has had on communities of color, low income communities, and other vulnerable populations. Projects include training, developing citizen-science tools, pollution monitoring, and educational campaigns to enable EJ advocates, scientists, and decision-makers to address pollution and create thriving communities.

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 was signed into law in March 11, 2021. It provides funds to address health outcome disparities from pollution and the COVID-19 pandemic. To learn more about the ARP, visit: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/1319/text>