



10 QUESTIONS

About Air Quality in Houston For Your Elected Officials

The Greater Houston area faces unique air quality and environmental justice challenges. Communities throughout Houston are impacted by air pollution from both heavy traffic and industrial facilities and this burden is not distributed equally. Communities of color and working class neighborhoods experience disproportionate exposure to air pollution.

Below are 10 facts about Houston's air quality and questions that you can ask your elected officials and other decision-makers about how they plan to address these issues.

1

FACT Houston is home to over 400 chemical and manufacturing facilities, over 150 concrete batch plants, and more than 140 metal recycling facilities that can expose residents to harmful air pollutants. Industry is expanding and Houston already releases more toxic air pollution than the top five metropolitan economies combined.

QUESTION(S) How do you support initiatives to monitor the air quality near sources of air pollution in your district? How do you engage industry to ensure they are taking the necessary steps to protect the health and safety of residents?

2

FACT The majority of air pollution in the region is generated from traffic-related emissions. Air toxics from vehicles, such as benzene and formaldehyde, can cause damage to the immune system, reproductive and neurological disorders, and respiratory problems.

QUESTION(S) What do you think are the most effective strategies to decrease traffic-related air pollution? What is your position on expanding highways to mitigate traffic congestion?

3

FACT Houston does not have enough air monitoring. To better understand communities' exposure to toxic air pollution and develop appropriate mitigation strategies, a robust community air monitoring network is needed.

QUESTION(S) How do you work with outside organizations to support plans to improve community air monitoring where there are existing gaps?

4

FACT Major chemical incidents are frequent in the Houston area, putting the health and well-being of communities at risk. An analysis in 2016 by the Houston Chronicle found that there is one chemical accident in Houston every six weeks.

QUESTION(S) Do you support the establishment of a toxic alert system to notify residents in "real time" that their health and safety are at risk from chemical disasters?

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5

FACT While the Port of Houston is a major contributor to air pollution in the Houston region, the Port's recently released Clean Air Strategy Plan does not include emissions reductions targets. The Port of Houston lacks transparency in its decision-making and operations and these decisions have a direct impact on the health of communities nearby.

QUESTION(S) How are you working with the Port of Houston to ensure that it strengthens its Clean Air Strategy Plan? How are you advocating for impacted residents to have a voice and influence in Port decision-making processes?

6

FACT The voices of communities, particularly those that suffer disproportionately from environmental injustices, are often ignored or not able to influence decisions that can adversely affect their health.

QUESTION(S) Will you be an active participant in advocating for the implementation of policies that advance environmental justice? Will you advocate to ensure that voices of communities that suffer disproportionately from the adverse impacts of environmental hazards and climate-related disasters are not only integrated but also have an influence on policy decisions?

7

FACT TCEQ has only held facilities accountable for 3% of violations during the past 5 years. TCEQ is now making it even easier for industry to pollute our air.

QUESTION(S) How are you working with elected officials locally and across the state to advocate for more enforcement and control at the local level?

8

FACT There is a disparity of twenty-three and a half years between Houston neighborhoods in the average number of years a person can expect to live. These differences are closely aligned with cancer risk from air toxics.

QUESTION(S) What steps have you taken or are you willing to take to address these health inequities?

9

FACT The Houston area ranks second in the nation for carbon dioxide emissions per capita.

QUESTION(S) How will you support the recommendations that are outlined in the Houston Climate Action Plan? Do you think the Houston Climate Action Plan is aggressive enough? What other policies do you think will help the region become more resilient from the impacts of climate change?

10

FACT Elected officials and government agencies throughout the country and around the world are increasing their efforts to address air quality through policy changes, increasing funds to support air monitoring and mitigations, and partnering across sectors.

QUESTION(S) What investments have you made and/or do you plan to make to address air quality in your district? How have/will you directly engage impacted residents? How have/will you advocate to hold problematic facilities accountable?

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