

Recently, Senator Joe Manchin (D -WV) and Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-NY) announced they reached a legislative deal to confront climate change in the newly announced Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022.

Below is Micronesia Climate Change Alliance's statement:

Micronesia Climate Change Alliance is a grassroots, BIPOC led organization on the frontlines of the climate crisis. Colonialism, destructive capitalism and hyper-militarization is paralyzing our community and our people are buckling under the weight of rising utility, housing, food and gas prices. An increase in severity and frequency of cyclones, erosion, sea level rise, droughts and ocean acidification threaten the livelihoods of millions in an expanse that takes up half the world. The changing tides require bold collective action across the seas. For the 10 million or so people who call the Pacific Islands home, we are already living through destabilizing climate impacts that not only threaten our indigenous ways of living but our very existence.

While we see that this piece of legislation contains environmental justice initiatives, it also misses the mark on providing grassroots organizations meaningful pathways or funding to address systemic failures that gravely impact our communities. The eligibility guidelines for environmental justice which allow larger corporations and NGO's to apply for grants on a "competitive basis" presents many challenges for grassroots organizations whose highly diverse infrastructure, mission, and impact, does not look, function, or communicate quite like larger, more established organizations. Many grassroots organizations, including ours, have been limited in accessing funds from larger foundations because these harmful eligibility guidelines typically only support larger organizations that have redundant capabilities to themselves and are specialized or technocratic. This also means that NGOs propped up by larger companies and polluters are able to avail themselves to more funding over grassroots organizations, amplifying corporate and state voices over those most impacted by inequity.

We also see that this piece of legislation has bundled wind and solar development in a package with oil and gas leasing and labeled it as "energy security". Residents in Micronesia pay some of the highest utility rates in the entire country and with the climate crisis intensifying, we will only be using more power. Energy democracy, rather than security, has the potential to transform poor and neglected communities by building financial systems of shared ownership rather than facilitating a continuous cycle of wealth accumulation. If the purpose of this bill is to prioritize environmental justice then we need a radical shift and shape in policies from corporate control to democratic public and social ownership of the energy sector. This piece of legislation does not support community-scale innovations that actually serve to increase community capacity. The IRA also expands offshore wind leasing areas to Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands which is of particular concern as offshore wind has the potential to harm our already fragile ocean which is our life support system in the Pacific, not a corporate financial investment.

There are also other problematic strategies listed to address climate change such as investments in CCS, nuclear, hydrogen, biofuels and carbon trading. None of these mechanisms address the root causes of climate change and also have the potential to worsen

the crisis. These false solutions only benefit corporations and allow for the increase of corporate control over land, water, and agriculture. These false solutions not only harm communities and ecosystems but facilitate the displacement and loss of rights of indigenous people, who are the greatest caretakers of our planet and critical players to combating climate change.

We call on leaders and representatives of different sectors to oppose the pieces of this bill which perpetuate corporate interests. There is no one that will fight harder for change than the very people being directly impacted by injustice which is why arming frontline communities with proper funding and regenerative, community based solutions should be a priority over already well funded corporations and NGOs.

Additionally, when climate policies allow for false market solutions, communities like ours lose the most while corporations rake in profits at our expense. The islands of Micronesia are one of the most vulnerable regions to the climate crisis. We have so much at stake; whole homelands, countries, cultures, lifeways and the vitality of our ocean. Pacific wisdom and indigenous resilience can drive true wins in global goals to combat the crisis. But our voice, ideas and solutions are absent in this legislation.