

UCS JEDI Report 2025

An annual update on the Union of Concerned Scientists' work to center justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) in our science-based advocacy, impact, and organizational culture

Throughout 2025 the staff and board of directors of UCS faced challenges unlike previous years in our efforts to promote science-based advocacy and center JEDI values in our work. A hostile regulatory environment rooted in an anti-science agenda and bigotry has made the work of the UCS JEDI Office all the more vital in meeting the current moment.

Today, our commitment to doing excellent scientific work while rejecting the harmful effects of oppressive policies by applying a JEDI lens to our choices and interactions remains evergreen despite the amplified pressure coming from the federal administration. An equity-centered approach to our work ensures critical data and perspectives are incorporated, which makes our science better.

The work of the JEDI Office in 2025, as with our programmatic work, was grounded in the strategic preparations undertaken in 2024 for two possible realities: a Trump administration or a Harris administration. Recognizing the challenges to science and equity posed by the former, we engaged in thorough planning to create strategic plans designed to keep our work moving forward. This preparation proved invaluable in tracking the Trump administration's many executive orders and how they would affect our science and JEDI work.

While many organizations were forced to dismantle their diversity, equity, and inclusion departments, UCS strengthened ours with the expansion of our JEDI Office. Today, with an expanded team, our efforts of the past three years are beginning to bear fruit: by supporting their skill development, our staff has a better understanding of the importance of our commitment to JEDI values and the ways in which we operationalize them. This, in turn, allows us to more effectively build JEDI into the work of our departments and programs.

The JEDI Office seeks to broaden the organization's depth of engagement in JEDI principles in three broad categories:

- **Education.** Create opportunities for deepening organizational understanding of topics related to JEDI through guest talks, workshops, conferences, and media.

- **Initiatives.** Support departmental and program work related to advancing science for the public good in equitable and inclusive ways.
- **Partnerships.** Strengthen existing partnerships with coalitions and environmental justice organizations that center science-based advocacy for people historically harmed by inequity.

The JEDI Office offered numerous JEDI-centric education sessions for the organization at large, geared towards reinforcing a culture of respect for the humanity of all, and caring for our staff at a time of increased stress. Over the past year, education sessions on topics including Tribal history and Indigenous Knowledge were rated highly internally and offered the organization more tools to bridge science and equity. Additionally, we introduced round table discussions across UCS that we will host regularly as a space where everyone is invited to share best practices and updates on how their JEDI initiatives are unfolding within their programs.

Below are three examples of how UCS made important strides in 2025 to successfully center JEDI in our scientific work:

After a Long Effort, a Step for Nuclear Justice

After roughly five years of advocacy, UCS and a national coalition of community groups and congressional champions passed the largest expansion of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) in history. UCS began working on RECA after an extensive period of community relationship building and learning: listening to the stories of those directly affected by radiation exposure, meeting with grassroots leaders, and understanding the needs and goals of their communities. This enabled our Global Security Program to elevate the voices of affected communities (many of whom had been working towards RECA expansion for decades) and win champions in Congress. The expanded program will provide \$8 billion in compensation, estimated to reach some 125,000 people—roughly

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tripling the previous program's scope. It was a historic team effort and an enormous success that will have a direct benefit for tens of thousands of people adversely affected by US nuclear weapons activities.

Ensuring Democracy Is Truly Representative

The Center for Science and Democracy at UCS has been working to show how federal agencies can remove long-standing structural barriers that keep communities—especially Black, Latino, and Indigenous communities—from participating fully in the democratic process. By focusing on improving transparency, public participation, and equitable access to evidence-informed decisionmaking, our fair access work seeks to strengthen the foundations of a functioning democracy. When people can meaningfully engage with the policies that shape their lives, the government becomes more accountable to all of its constituents.

A Map to Hold Polluters Accountable

The Center for Science and Democracy at UCS also launched an interactive map titled “Dirty, Air, Dirty Deeds” documenting 546 industrial sites across the United States and Puerto Rico that the Trump administration has deemed eligible for exemption from Clean Air Act requirements that would have limited their toxic air pollution for the next two years. UCS estimates that nearly 4.6 million people live within two miles of these facilities, and among those, more than 1.4 million live within two miles of two or more facilities—meaning they may be exposed to even more pollution.

- Nearly 62 percent of exemption-eligible facilities (337) are in communities with a higher rate of people with low incomes compared to the US average.
- Seventy of these facilities are in communities with a higher rate of people with low incomes, people who identify as non-White, and people who do not speak English as their first language compared to US averages.
- Six of the facilities shown on the map are within two or fewer miles of Tribal land boundaries including the Gila River Indian Community and Navajo Nation in the states of Arizona and New Mexico, and the Cherokee Nation and Muscogee Creek Nation in the state of Oklahoma.

UCS is committed to using science as a tool for advancing equity and justice, and this interactive map provides organizers and legislators with a tool to hold the Trump administration accountable and to make polluters pay for the harm they cause.

Conclusion

In our work as scientists, advocates, and colleagues, it is critical that we at UCS increase our capacity to stay in robust and equitable partnerships while encouraging a diversity of thought and ideas that includes the perspectives of those who are often left out. This is fundamental to the practices we value in science.

The JEDI Office remains committed to supporting the work and relationships of staff with each other and with our external partners—focusing on work that has positive, long-term impacts on the most pressing issues of our time.



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The Union of Concerned Scientists puts rigorous, independent science into action, developing solutions and advocating for a healthy, safe, and just future.

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