



Rebuilding for a Clean Energy Economy: Congress and the New Administration Can Create Jobs Through Renewable Energy

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There has been a lot of bad news about the economy in recent months. But now some good news: America can generate millions of high-paying jobs *and* create a cleaner environment with one win-win solution—renewable energy. Ramping up renewable energy will bring new jobs to U.S. workers and address the increasingly urgent need for action on global warming. Congress and the new administration should move quickly to pass strong climate legislation that will set a science-based declining cap on global warming pollution and create a new market for clean energy that will put people to work.

Clean Energy Can Bring Jobs to U.S. Workers

Renewable energy like wind and solar can generate high-paying jobs in many economic sectors. From welders to solar panel installers to engineers, green jobs can boost U.S. employment.

Two million jobs can be created by investing in clean energy technologies. A September 2008 University of Massachusetts-Amherst report finds that a two-year, \$100 billion green investment program—an amount comparable to the size of the April 2008 federal stimulus package dedicated to consumer rebates—would be an extremely powerful engine for job creation in

the United States.¹ Clean energy jobs are already in place around the country. At least 750,000 Americans already have jobs tied to clean energy development, according to a recent report by the US Conference of Mayors.²

Clean energy jobs are a better investment than “old energy” jobs. Dollar for dollar, investing in clean energy creates more jobs than investing in traditional energy sources like oil and gas.³ In fact, a NRDC study shows that investing in clean energy would create four times as many jobs as would result from spending the same amount of money within the oil industry.

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Clean energy jobs build a strong middle class and lift people out of poverty. As Van Jones, the founding director of the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights and the author of the new book *The Green Collar Economy* explains: “Green-collar jobs are good jobs. Like blue-collar jobs, green-collar jobs pay family wages and provide opportunities for advancement along a career track of increasing skills and wages. A job that does something for the planet, and little to nothing for the people or the economy, is not a green-collar job. The green economy cannot be built with solar sweat shops and Wal-Mart wind farms. Most green-collar jobs are middle-skill jobs requiring more education than high school, but less than a four-year degree—and are well within reach for lower-skilled and low-income workers as long as they have access to effective training programs and appropriate supports.”⁴

U.S. business is waiting *right now* for Washington to lead the way on clean energy jobs. A common-sense national policy on global warming and energy will drive further

market investments in clean energy. The United States could reduce a huge amount of its global warming pollution at little or no net cost, but first Congress must send the right policy signals so that markets channel more of their capital into clean energy technologies and energy efficiency than traditional energy supplies.⁵ A “pay-as-you-pollute” arrangement could bring down global warming pollution and generate huge capital for green investments.

We already know how to raise \$150 billion a year for clean energy jobs. By charging big polluters for their global warming pollution, Congress could raise around \$150 billion per year under a firm national limit on global warming pollution with an accompanying market that rewards smart companies for real reductions to develop and deploy clean energy systems throughout the United States. Part of this revenue will be rebated directly back to households and part will go directly into clean energy investments. By sending a strong market signal, the cap will direct additional private capital toward clean energy technologies, creating millions of new jobs.

The United States could help rebuild its global economic leadership by focusing on clean energy. The global market for environmental services and products is around \$1.3 trillion, according to an analysis by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the International Labor Organization (ILO).⁶ The report projects that a significant shift to clean energy investments could create as many as 20 million new jobs worldwide by 2030. By passing strong climate legislation, America will benefit from much of that economic growth—and the millions of new jobs it will provide.



¹ *Green Recovery: A Program to Create Good Jobs and Start Building a Low-Carbon Economy*, Center for American Progress and the Political Economy Research Institute, September 2008. Available online at http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2008/09/pdf/green_recovery.pdf.

² *U.S. Metro Economies: Current and Potential Green Jobs in the U.S. Economy*, The United States Conference of Mayors, October 2008. Available online at <http://www.usmayors.org/pressreleases/uploads/GreenJobsReport.pdf>.

³ Testimony of Robert Pollin, Co-Director of the Political Economy Research Institute. Hearing on “Building an Economic Recovery Package: Creating and Preserving Jobs in America,” October 24, 2008. Available online at <http://edlabor.house.gov/testimony/2008-10-24-RobertPollin.pdf>.

⁴ Van Jones, “Memo to Candidates: Green-collar Jobs Mean Standing Up for People and the Planet.” January 25, 2008. Available online at <http://gristmill.grist.org/story/2008/1/24/145628/140>.

⁵ McKinsey & Company, *Reducing U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions: How Much at What Cost?* (December 2007). Sponsored by DTE Energy, Environmental Defense, Honeywell, National Grid, NRDC, PG&E, and Shell. Available online at www.mckinsey.com/client-service/ccsi/greenhousegas.asp.

⁶ *Green Jobs: Towards Decent Work in a Sustainable, Low-Carbon World*, United Nations Environment Program and the International Labor Organization.