



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Green Prosperity and Poverty Reduction

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Low-income households in Washington, D.C. could receive significant benefits from clean-energy investment in the District. These potential benefits would include a substantial expansion in job opportunities, especially for people with high school degrees or less; rising wages; reduced home heating and utility costs; and improved access and convenience for public transportation. All of these benefits would be in addition to the environmental gains achieved through large-scale investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy (see Table 1).

These benefits will be encouraged by the clean-energy features of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the February 2009 Obama stimulus program. They will also be supported by the American Clean Energy and Security Act, now being considered in Congress. Among the features of this pending bill are measures to ensure that low-income households will not be affected by possible future oil, gas, and coal price increases tied to the legislation.

Below, we look at the potential impact on Washington, D.C. of an economy-wide \$150 billion shift in spending from fossil fuels to clean energy. According to a recent study by PERI and the Center for American Progress, based on the District's current population and the size of its economy, that would bring roughly \$562 million in clean-energy investments into the District.* This is equivalent to almost one percent of all economic activity in the District in 2008.

In Washington, D.C., investment in a clean-energy economy would produce 5,514 jobs, almost 3,000 for workers with high school degrees or less, and cut unemployment by almost two percentage points.

EMPLOYMENT

A \$562 million investment in clean energy in the District would create a net expansion of 5,514 jobs there, based on the state's labor market in 2008 (see Table 2). This would be enough to reduce unemployment in the state by 1.7 percentage points, from 7.0 to 5.3 percent as of 2008. A reduction in unemployment of this amount could, in turn, lead to a rise in the average wage for workers in D.C. of over three percent.

* Pollin, Robert, James Heintz, and Heidi Garrett-Peltier. 2009. "The Economic Benefits of Investing in Clean Energy: How the economic stimulus program and new legislation will boost U.S. economic growth and employment," Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.

The impact would be particularly strong for workers with lower levels of education. In Table 3, we categorize the jobs that would be added by investing in clean energy according to three categories: 'college degree jobs,' requiring at least a B.A. degree; 'some college jobs,' requiring some college but not a B.A.; and 'high school or less jobs.' This last category includes jobs that tend to offer decent opportunities for advancement and higher wages over time, such as jobs in construction, manufacturing and transportation. These jobs are in contrast to 'high school or less' jobs in hotels, restaurants, and personal service industries, where opportunities for advancement are much lower.

As Table 3 shows, this shift of \$562 million from fossil fuels to clean energy will produce almost 3,000 new 'high school or less' jobs (roughly half of all jobs generated by clean-energy investments in Washington, D.C.), including over 2,000 of those jobs that tend to offer opportunities for rising earnings over time.

TABLE 1. BENEFITS FROM A CLEAN-ENERGY INVESTMENT PROGRAM FOR LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

1) New jobs created	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5,514 new jobs overall • 2,502 jobs for workers with high school degrees or less
2) Falling unemployment produces rising wages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earnings could rise 3.4% for low-income workers as unemployment in the District falls by almost two percentage points
3) Benefits of retrofitting buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retrofits could reduce living costs by up to 4%
4) Improved public transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discounting public transit fares between 25 and 50% could reduce living costs by 1 - 2% • Households that forego the use of one car could reduce living costs by about 10%

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BUILDING RETROFITS

Washington, D.C. has a relatively old housing stock and a moderate climate. This means significant opportunities exist for achieving energy savings for low-income people through building retrofits. Specifically, energy costs for the existing housing stock could fall enough for homeowners and renters to achieve energy savings in the range of four percent of their overall incomes.

In Washington, D.C., homeowners and renters could save up to 4 percent of their income by investing in retrofits, and 1 to 2 percent of their living costs through discounted public transportation.

For the 44 percent of District residents who own their homes, retrofits (such as replacing windows or upgrading insulation) could be facilitated by organizations such as banks, utilities or non-profit community groups who could provide financing and management, thereby relieving individuals of the need to take the initiative and bear the up-front costs of arranging retrofits of their homes. For the 56 percent of households who rent, policies will need to ensure that renters, not just landlords, receive benefits from energy efficiency investments. Renters who pay utility bills directly would see their bills fall in proportion to the overall energy savings, sharing the benefit with their landlords. Renters in subsidized housing, who typically do not pay for their utilities directly, should see their fixed rents reduced proportionally to the reduction in energy costs.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

The District of Columbia has an extensive and well utilized public transportation system; 38 percent of workers in the city commute by public transportation. A clean-energy investment agenda could best improve the accessibility of the District's public transportation system by reducing fares on the well-utilized public transportation options already in place.

Low-income riders who already use public transit heavily, could save about one to two percent of their incomes if they receive discounts on their public transit fares of between 25 and 50 percent. Finally, any improvements to District's public transportation offerings that enable households to forgo the use of one car could reduce their living costs by roughly 10 percent.

TABLE 2. NET EMPLOYMENT EXPANSION THROUGH \$562 MILLION SHIFT FROM FOSSIL FUELS TO CLEAN ENERGY (BASED ON 2008 LABOR MARKET)

Job creation	5,514 jobs
Unemployment rate before clean-energy investments	7.0 %
Unemployment rate after clean-energy investments	5.3%

source: 2004-2008 Current Population Survey; Bureau of Labor Statistics 2008, IMPLAN.

TABLE 3. BREAKDOWN OF NET JOB EXPANSION BY FORMAL EDUCATION CREDENTIALS

College degree jobs • B.A. or above • \$28.00 average wage	2,267 (41.1% of clean-energy jobs)
Some college jobs • some college but not B.A. • \$15.90 average wage	745 (13.5% of clean-energy jobs)
High school or less jobs • high school degree or less • \$13.00 average wage	2,502 (45.4% of clean-energy jobs)
High school or less jobs with decent earnings potential • \$15.00 average wage	2,053 (37.2% of clean-energy jobs)

source: 2004-2008 Current Population Survey; IMPLAN.

The full report from which the data in this fact sheet are drawn can be found at www.peri.umass.edu.

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