

Climate Action: Healthy Communities + Strong Economy



In the last five years, over 4,500 MW of utility-scale solar energy was built in California creating more than 15,000 new construction, operations and maintenance jobs and reducing 4.8 million tons of nitrogen oxides, 3.3 million tons of carbon dioxide and 525,000 tons of sulfur dioxide.

-Dr. Peter Phillips, "Economic and Environmental Benefits of Building Solar in California," Donald Vial Center on Employment in the Green Economy, Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, University of California Berkeley, November 2014

How can we create good jobs while building a more sustainable economy?

Creating a sustainable economy that builds a strong middle-class starts with smart policy and strategic investments in local workers and our communities. Lowering greenhouse gas emissions through renewable energy, cleaner transportation and greener buildings can generate new careers, reduce pollution and help us use precious resources more wisely. To make sure green jobs are also good jobs, states and municipalities can craft policies that set aggressive targets to reduce emissions and include workforce provisions like project labor agreements, apprenticeship requirements, job quality standards, paid leave and health and safety training.

What kinds of industries and new jobs are created through green investments?

- Renewable energy including solar, wind and geothermal
- Mass transit, electric vehicle charging stations, high-speed rail
- Water and energy efficient buildings and communities
- Microgrids, energy storage, distributed generation and distribution grid upgrades
- Water Reclamation facilities
- Bike lane and pedestrian-friendly upgrades to existing streets
- Biofuels, biorefineries and alternative fuels for airplanes
- Technology, software and analytics
- Sustainable materials, green chemistry

What can we do to make sure green jobs are union jobs?

At its core, climate action is about transformation and raising standards -- healthier communities, good-paying jobs and resilient neighborhoods that are prepared for the challenges of a changing planet. This means addressing inequality while building a cleaner future to make sure environmental and economic sustainability go hand-in-hand. In this context, green industries that create poverty jobs are no more sustainable than fossil fuel industries that pay people well but poison the air and water. As we have throughout history, the labor movement has led progressive change and raised standards for all. Organizing the green economy will take all of the traditional tools at our disposal plus new, creative tactics like forging alliances with environmental partners and other diverse allies and creating public demand for strong climate policies that reduce emissions, build resilient communities and strengthen collective bargaining to lift up working families.