

Building Energy Efficiency: Unions Train a New Generation of Workers for Green Jobs

Global warming and our dependence on fossil fuels are the foremost environmental issues of our time. Addressing these challenges is key to our economic recovery and will provide unparalleled opportunities to create jobs and launch new models for economic development. We can put America back to work by investing in clean energy, but we must also ensure that the green jobs we create are good family and community-sustaining jobs that will strengthen our economy over the long run.

Wisely spent, federal investments in clean energy will provide a strong foundation for clean energy industries to deliver significant economic and environmental benefits. In order for the green economy to succeed, we need a robust workforce to capitalize on these new opportunities. Labor unions can play a key role by ensuring that there are well-trained workers with comprehensive skills.

Unions can provide a counter balance to corporate greed by giving workers a voice on the job about safety, security, pay, benefits, and about the best ways to get work done. Union members make on average 22 percent more than non-union members and approximately 90 percent of unionized workers receive health insurance, compared with 69 percent of non-union workers.^{1,2}



Located on the front line, these workers have better protections and training to blow the whistle on health and safety risks in the workplace, including hazardous pollution, chemical spills and other accidents that can devastate communities.

Working to Capture Energy Savings

By investing in energy efficiency, we can create good jobs for American workers and reduce global warming pollution. Currently, buildings are responsible for 40 percent of U.S. global warming pollution and 70 percent of electricity use.³ Upgrading heating and cooling systems, appliances and insulation in buildings will improve community health and safety, create jobs, cut energy costs, reduce our dependence on dirty fossil fuels and slash global warming pollution.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) will invest \$5 billion to jumpstart this work, expanding the Department of Energy's Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) in order to meet the Obama Administration's goal of weatherizing one million homes per year.⁴ This investment will address the 20 percent of U.S. global warming pollution from residential buildings.⁵

The demand for weatherization work will require an industry that can train and connect workers to hundreds of thousands of new jobs. Thirty eight million low-income households nationwide are eligible for services through the WAP.⁶ Weatherization services save residents about \$350 or more on energy costs per year.⁷ Every \$1 million invested creates 52 direct jobs and 23 indirect jobs — approximately 300,000 jobs could be created in the effort in the next few years.⁸

Weatherization at Work

In order to jumpstart an expanded and sustainable residential energy efficiency industry, the Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA) has launched a breakthrough, nationwide program to train new workers in residential construction and weatherization work. This program will contribute to upgrading millions of poorly insulated homes and help put more money back into people's pockets instead of paying utility companies for wasted energy.

LIUNA works with community partners to provide local, unemployed workers with training as Technician/Installers, Weatherization Supervisors and Energy Auditors, as well as access to a network of future employment connections.

LIUNA's weatherization program could train up to 10,000 workers nationwide in its first three years, reducing energy bills for several million homes nationwide over the next 10 years. Combined with LIUNA's commitment to training residents of low-income communities, these training programs help to rebuild America's middle class and economy.

Improving Livelihoods

In 2009, Laborers' Local 55, working with the Garden State Alliance for a New Economy, provided weatherization training for unemployed,



local residents in Newark, New Jersey. The program ensured that these green jobs were also good jobs: trainees earned accreditation, were paid family supporting wages and received health benefits.

In January 2009, a crew of 21 workers from LIUNA's pilot program performed energy audits, sealed air leaks with caulking, applied weather stripping around doors, wrapped pipes and hot water heaters and applied fiberglass insulation in 30 Newark homes.

The program delivered concrete benefits to home owners: those whose houses were weatherized saw a 25 percent reduction in their energy bills.⁹

In April 2009, twenty three students graduated from LIUNA's pilot program.¹⁰ LIUNA expects to train an additional 350 New Jersey residents by the end of the year and is working to formalize, develop and expand its weatherization training program. Already, the success of LIUNA's Newark program has fostered interest in developing similar programs in other cities in the region.

LIUNA's work illustrates that by putting America to work, we can reduce household energy bills, create thousands of new jobs, save energy and slash global warming pollution.

For More Information

Visit www.sierraclub.org/greenjobs/training, www.liunabuildsamerica.org/weatherize and www.bluegreenalliance.org.

Footnotes

1. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Union Members in 2007. January 2009. <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/union2.pdf>
2. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Employee Benefits in Private Industry. August 2008. <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/ebs2.t02.htm>
3. Building Design + Construction. "Green Buildings + Climate Change." November 2008. <http://www.bdcnetwork.com/contents/pdfs/WP2008.pdf>
4. U.S. Department of Energy. "Weatherization Assistance Program - The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009." March 2009. http://apps1.eere.energy.gov/weatherization/pdfs/wx_recovery_fact_sheet.pdf
5. U.S. Department of Energy. "Buildings Energy Data Book." 2008. <http://buildingsdatabook.eren.doe.gov/TableView.aspx?table=2.4.1>
6. U.S. Department of Energy. "Weatherization Assistance Program - The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009." March 2009.
7. U.S. Department of Energy. "Weatherization Assistance Program." July 2009. <http://apps1.eere.energy.gov/weatherization/>
8. Millhone, John P. "The "Longest Running and Perhaps Most Successful" U.S. Energy Efficiency Program" Federation of American Scientists. 2008. <http://fas.org/programs/energy/btech/policy/Weatherization%20Article.pdf>
9. U.S. Department of Energy. Weatherization Assistance Program Subgrantee Information - NJ. 2009. http://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dhcr/offices/docs/wap09_12plan_2of2.pdf
10. Lefkowitz, Jason. "Training Workers for the Green Jobs of Today and Tomorrow." *Change to Win*, July 1, 2009. http://www.changetowin.org/connect/2009/07/training_workers_for_the_green.html



SIERRA CLUB
408 C St NE
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 547-1141
www.SierraClub.org



BLUE GREEN ALLIANCE
1133 15th St NW
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 548-6591
www.BlueGreenAlliance.org



LABORERS' INTERNATIONAL UNION
OF NORTH AMERICA
905 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 737-8320 • www.LIUNA.org