



**SIERRA
CLUB**

IOWA CHAPTER

Green Jobs: Economic Development, Environmental Protection, and Workers' Rights

The Iowa Chapter of the Sierra Club supports green jobs that allow economic development AND environmental protection AND workers' rights. Economic development, environmental protection and workers' rights can fit hand-in-glove. New jobs do not have to pollute the environment and destroy the public health.

Protecting Workers' Rights

The Iowa Chapter supports jobs that pay decent wages and provide benefits that support a family. The Chapter also supports policies that ensure the fair treatment of workers and that ensure the right for labor to organize.

The Sierra Club supports the legislation similar to the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) including provisions which will

- ease current restrictions workers face when forming and joining unions
- allow workers to be recognized as a bargaining collective if a majority of the workers sign cards
- help workers secure contracts with their employers
- toughen penalties against employers who violate workers' rights

Unionized workers are better trained to understand the health and safety risks of toxic chemicals. Additionally, because of the job security provided by unions, unionized workers are more likely to speak up about accidents and hazards in the workplace.

The Iowa Chapter also supports protection for whistleblowers who sound the alarm when toxics are allowed to pollute the environment, when chemical spills occur and when materials not handled properly could lead to accidents.

Components that protect the environment

Additionally, the Iowa Chapter supports policies that promote economic development AND environmental protection, including

- Rational and fair regulation that is good for all Iowans. Smart environmental regulation creates jobs in both the private and public sector.
- State revolving loan fund that can be used by Iowans and businesses to install energy efficiency measures and renewable energy generation techniques, at interest rates more favorable than credit-card rates. One of the benefits of the revolving loan funds being used to assist Iowans and businesses installing energy efficiency measures and renewable energy generation is the boost it gives to the economy by the creation of jobs.
- Retiring tax-increment-financing so that all entities pay their fair share of the taxes and so that sprawl and environmental destruction are not promoted.
- Developing and implementing a certification program for solar and wind installers.

Green Job Creation

The Brookings Institution defines the clean economy to be “economic activity – measured in terms of establishments and the jobs associated with them – that produces goods and services with an environmental benefit or adds value to such products using skills or technologies that are uniquely applied to those products.”¹ Green jobs in the 21st Century involve investing in clean and renewable energy, such as wind and solar; building energy-efficient cars that use less gasoline; and installing energy efficient measures for homes and businesses – jobs that use the natural resources more sustainably and responsibly. Other green jobs include monitoring pollution emission and enforcing laws so that pollutants do not foul the air, water and land. Still other jobs involve cleaning up the pollutants left behind, from brown fields to irresponsible pollutant disposal.

Some of the green jobs that can be created include:

- Manufacturing wind turbine components and solar panels
- Contractors who can install energy efficiency solutions
- Contractors who can install renewable energy generation techniques, such as wind, solar and geothermal
- Building LEED-certified buildings
- Technicians who can maintain renewable energy generation facilities should repair, replacement or upgrading be needed
- Staff who can educate the public and businesses on controlling pollution, preventing soil erosion and good farming practices
- Water monitoring
- Clean-up of dirty water by planting buffers
- Adequate staffing of the permitting divisions of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources staff to adequately monitor and enforce environmental regulations and to punish those who choose to violate the laws
- Construction jobs to build scrubbers and pollution-control devices on industry buildings
- Upgrades of sewage treatment plants so they do not overflow during rainstorms or the spring thaw
- Upgrades of technology in sewage treatment plants so they do not pollute
- Entities that are contracted to test and evaluate new techniques such as improved efficiency or better farming methodologies
- Certification instructors and testers to ensure that solar and wind installers are certified for the work

¹ “Now, a definition for ‘green’ jobs in U.S.,” By Julie Wernau, *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, July 15, 2011