

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over 10 million people are out of work, another six million people are underemployed, and yet another seven million people who want a job have given up trying to find one. Unemployment among low-income households is hovering around Great Depression levels. Job losses have been particularly acute for women, and the unemployment rate for Black and Latinx workers remains more than 50 percent higher than for white workers. Due to economic hardship, more than one in three families with children cannot afford adequate food, one in five households could not pay last month's rent, and over half of all households are having difficulty covering expenses.

To tackle this economic crisis, we cannot simply reopen the economy and hope things return to “normal.” “Normal” was fundamentally unjust, unhealthy, and unstable. Thanks to decades of “normal” conditions, millions of people — particularly in Black and Latinx communities — breathe in air pollution that increases the risks of COVID-19, earn as much in one year as Jeff Bezos makes in 20 seconds, and are forced to grapple with increasing climate-related storms, droughts, and fires.

We have to do better than “normal.” We need to put millions of people back to work building a healthier, more equitable, clean energy economy that leaves no one behind. The THRIVE Agenda outlines a plan to do just that. Backed by over 100 members of Congress and hundreds of union, racial justice, climate, and other grassroots groups, the THRIVE Agenda offers Congress an eight-pillar blueprint for economy-wide investments. To “build back better” instead of reverting to the unjust status quo, Congress needs to pass a THRIVE-aligned economic renewal plan that is as comprehensive as the crises we face.

A new economic analysis from the Political Economy Research Institute reveals that a bold, THRIVE-aligned economic renewal plan would **provide family-sustaining jobs for 15.5 million people for the next 10 years** — enough to essentially end the unemployment crisis — while building an economy that fosters cleaner air and water, higher wages, healthier communities, greater equity, and a more stable climate. Here's the sectoral breakdown of the 15.5 million new jobs:

- ▶ Over 5.2 million new jobs to upgrade our infrastructure for clean water, clean transportation, and clean energy;
- ▶ Over 4.1 million new jobs to expand renewable energy and increase energy efficiency;
- ▶ Over 3.9 million new jobs to restore our lands and invest in regenerative agriculture; and
- ▶ Over 2.3 million new jobs to care for children and the elderly and provide essential services.
- ▶ Economy-wide, nearly 1.6 million jobs would be created to manufacture the goods needed for all of the above investments.

This economic renewal plan would help us simultaneously tackle the multiple, mutually reinforcing crises that we face: public health, joblessness, inequity, and climate change. It would reduce the air pollution that is exacerbating COVID-19 risks, particularly in communities of color. It would counteract the gross levels of racial, economic, and gender inequity that the COVID crisis has magnified by ensuring that those hardest hit get priority access to economic and environmental benefits. While putting people back to work, this plan also would put us on a path to climate stability by enabling at least a 45 percent reduction in U.S. climate pollution by 2030, in line with targets set by climate scientists. Here are a few specific examples:



PHOTO: ISTOCK / KALI9

- ▶ To bolster our transition to a **100% clean energy economy**, stimulus investments could help many of the over 400,000 unemployed clean energy workers get their jobs back, while over 190,000 unemployed oil and gas workers could be employed to close orphaned oil and gas wells.
- ▶ A single program to exchange gas guzzlers for **affordable, clean electric vehicles** would yield over 635,000 jobs — nearly the entire population of Detroit — including over 77,000 good manufacturing jobs to produce the vehicles.
- ▶ Over 500,000 workers could be employed to **upgrade all public housing units, schools, hospitals and low-income homes nationwide** to support healthier living conditions, lower energy bills, and reduced pollution.
- ▶ Over 350,000 workers could be employed to replace lead pipes and secure **clean drinking water**.
- ▶ Over 225,000 people could be employed to **protect our wetlands and forests and shield communities from toxic pollution** by restoring ecosystems and Superfund, Brownfield, and coal mine sites.

To employ 15.5 million people for five years, this economic recovery plan would cost less than \$5 trillion. That is less than the amount that the U.S. government committed in coronavirus spending in just March and April

of 2020. With the cost of borrowing at rock bottom, this is a small price to pay to offer economic security to millions of unemployed people while charting a path toward a society that is healthier, more just, and less prone to crisis.

The quality of the jobs created through this economic renewal plan is just as important as the quantity of jobs. Stimulus investments must be subject to **high-road labor standards** to ensure that the jobs created are family-sustaining careers that offer workers a dignified and meaningful livelihood and lasting economic security. To chart a path to a more equitable society, these jobs must be made accessible to all people. In addition, **equitable hiring practices and targeted investments** must be used to prioritize job creation, improved health outcomes, and environmental benefits for low-income communities, communities of color, women, and others who are bearing the brunt of the economic, health, and climate crises. Finally, to yield a healthier and more stable future, stimulus investments also **must address climate change and toxic pollution**. The materials, operations, and end use of projects must uphold environmental standards that reduce pollution and increase climate resilience for communities.

To see why it is essential to attach strong labor, equity, and environmental standards to stimulus investments, we



PHOTO: ISTOCK / AKE1150SB

can examine what would happen without such standards. In short, such a stimulus would reinforce the unjust status quo instead of counteracting persistent economic, racial, and gender inequity. The analysis from the Political Economy Research Institute offers some examples:

- ▶ **Job Quality:** While investments would create high-quality careers in some areas, without strong labor standards, certain job types would suffer from low salaries, inadequate benefits coverage, and very little union protection. For example, investments in surface transportation, regenerative agriculture, and the care economy — three of the biggest job creators — would pay salaries 40 percent to 70 percent lower than the national average salary. Meanwhile, certain investments would create jobs with health benefits for less than 40 percent of workers and retirement benefits for less than a third of workers. Absent additional measures, most jobs created also would not be unionized, particularly in industries where union density dips as low as 3 percent. To ensure that new jobs offer family-sustaining salaries and benefits and access to a union, a stimulus package must require **prevailing wage standards, use of project labor agreements, employer neutrality with regard to union organizing, and other labor standards.**
- ▶ **Job Equity:** Without strong equity standards, stimulus investments would simply replicate long-standing inequities in access to jobs. In many investment categories, those benefiting would be largely white and male, leaving women and people of color — particularly Black workers — with a disproportionately small slice of the economic benefits. For example, in 12 of 13 infrastructure investment cate-

gories, Black workers would constitute just 6 percent to 9 percent of the workforce, despite comprising 11 percent of the overall workforce. In general, people of color and women would be underrepresented in several high-paying job types, but overrepresented in certain low-paying job categories. For example, only 10 percent of high-paying rail jobs would go to women, while women would take on 80 percent of low-paying care economy jobs. To counteract inequity, a stimulus package must direct **at least 50 percent of investments to communities of color and other frontline communities, while requiring equitable hiring and contracting preferences that favor people of color and women.**

To tackle the full scope of the climate crisis while ending mass unemployment, this economic renewal plan would invest in sectors throughout the economy. Here is a breakdown of the jobs created by major industrial sector:

- ▶ **Manufacturing: 1.6 million new manufacturing jobs.** Investments in electric vehicles, wind power, and solar power would drive the manufacturing job boost. Buy America standards should apply to all investments to bolster the manufacturing base that we need to build a more just, clean energy economy.
- ▶ **Construction: 1.6 million new construction jobs.** Many of these jobs would stem from investments in upgrading infrastructure and buildings to boost efficiency and resilience while cutting pollution.
- ▶ **Services: 9.3 million new services jobs.** Investments in public parks and recreation, ecosystem restoration, and the care economy would yield a particularly high share of services jobs.

- ▶ **Agriculture: 1.4 million new agricultural jobs.** Investments in regenerative agriculture and marginalized farmers would yield these jobs, while supporting healthy food and rural economic security.

- ▶ **Wholesale and Retail: 1.2 million new wholesale and retail jobs.** Most of these would be “induced jobs,” created thanks to increased spending from workers supported by the stimulus investments.

For dynamic simulations of the job creation impacts of stimulus investments, please visit our [Jobs Calculator](#).



PHOTO: ISTOCK / MORSA IMAGES