



Wider Opportunities for Women

Green Construction Careers Demo in Climate Change Bills

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Climate change legislation pending in Congress holds the potential of opening thousands of employment and skill development opportunities to women and minorities who traditionally have been underrepresented in construction and technical areas needed to make homes and commercial buildings energy efficient. [The Clean Energy Jobs and American Power Act \(Sec. 303\)](#) was introduced by Senators John Kerry and Barbara Boxer on Sept. 29 and is pending before the Environment and Public Works Committee. [The American Clean Energy and Security Act \(H.R. 2454\)](#), introduced by Rep. Henry Waxman and Rep. Edward Markey, passed the House on June 26.

Green Construction Careers Demonstration Project

Both bills establish a demonstration project to “promote middle class careers and quality employment practices in the green construction sector among target workers and to advance efficiency and performance on construction projects.” The Secretary of Labor, in consultation with the Secretary of Labor, will identify projects, including residential retrofitting projects, funded or assisted under the Act which will be required to have a minimum proportion of hours worked by members of targeted groups. The bill leaves the number of projects and the percentage of work hours to the Secretary.

Targeted Worker – Both bills define a targeted worker as an individual who resides in the same market area as the project and who is:

- Eligible under the Work Opportunities Tax Credit, except ex-offenders;¹
- Resides in a census tract where at least 20% of the households are below the Federal poverty guidelines, or is part of a family who did not make more than 200% of the Federal poverty guidelines in the last two years; or
- A displaced homemaker (an individual who has been dependent on the income of another family member while providing unpaid care to family members in the home, is no longer supported by that income and is unemployed or underemployed and is experiencing difficulty getting or upgrading employment.

Apprenticeship and other training - Each prospective contractor and subcontractor in the demonstration project must submit with its bid or proposal assurances that it participates in a qualified apprenticeship or training program, with a qualified pre-apprenticeship program, for each craft or trade

¹ Recipients of TANF, food stamps, SSI and long-term disability assistance; veterans; high-risk youth; vocational rehabilitation referrals; summer youth employees and ex-offenders.

that will be employed. The Secretary may approve other types of DOL-registered apprenticeship and training programs if no programs exist in the locality that qualify as employee welfare benefit programs under ERISA.

Community Benefit Agreements: - The Secretary may require contracting agencies and recipients of federal assistance to enter into labor-management agreements for projects over \$25 million, as encouraged in Executive Order 13502 signed by President Obama on Feb. 6. Such agreements are pre-hire collective bargaining agreements between employers and one or more labor organization. PLAs help make Federal procurement more efficient, produce project stability, and ensure compliance with laws and regulations governing safety, health, equal employment opportunity, labor, and employment standards.

Evaluation - After three years, the Secretary is to evaluate the success in achieving its purpose and may accordingly identify additional projects. The Comptroller General, five years after enactment, is to advise Congressional committees of the results of the demonstration and make appropriate recommendations.

Community Colleges and Career and Technical Education

Both bills authorize the Secretary of Education to award competitive grants to community partnerships to develop programs of study under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006. The programs are to focus on emerging careers and jobs in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and climate change mitigation. Priority is given to online and innovative learning strategies and low-performing and special populations as defined in Perkins. Applicants must describe how the program will address the placement of students in nontraditional occupations. "Nontraditional" is defined by law as fields in which less than 25% of the workforce is one gender.

Climate Change Worker Adjustment Assistance

Both bills provide for workers displaced as a result of the Act. They would be entitled to 156 weeks of income supplement, 80 percent of their monthly health care premium, up to \$1,500 for job search assistance, up to \$1,500 for moving assistance, and additional employment services for skills assessment, job counseling, training, and other services.

Energy Worker Training Fund and Program

Both bills establish an Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Worker Training Fund to be funded by the proceeds from auctioning off carbon emissions allowances to businesses. The House version requires 0.75% of the proceeds to be put into the fund; the training fund would contain an estimated \$860 million by 2012-13. The Senate version does not yet specify a percentage that must be directed to this fund. The House version of the bill also increases the funding to the Pathways Out of Poverty Green Jobs Act by \$25 million and the Senate bill allows funds from the Training Fund to be used for the Green Jobs Act but does not appropriate extra money.