

Seven Simple Steps: The Best Job-Creating Policies for What Remains of the 111th Congress



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Members of the House and Senate will return to Washington in November with a few weeks left to finish legislative business before the official end of the 111th Congress. They will arrive knowing that the job is not done. The job is not done putting Americans back to work. The job is not done building a clean energy economy, and the job is not done reducing our dependence on foreign oil while confronting the challenge of global climate change.

This past August, the BlueGreen Alliance held a nationwide bus tour—"The Job's Not Done Tour"—holding events in more than 30 cities in 17 states to proclaim that America must continue to push toward a clean energy economy.

It is in the spirit of the tour that the BlueGreen Alliance urges the 111th Congress to move forward—and not to allow previous gridlock to prevent progress on seven well-known and widely supported policies that will create hundreds of thousands of jobs and a cleaner, safer, energy-independent economy.

Renewable Electricity Standard (RES)

A national RES target will mean more American clean energy and more American clean energy jobs. As introduced, Sen. Bingaman's and Sen. Brownback's RES legislation would send a clear signal to markets and innovators that the U.S. is ready to build its energy future on cleaner technologies and the jobs that go along with them. As Congress considers this first step, it is important to underscore that further action will be needed to capture the promise of renewable energy and address climate change and to ensure that the expansion of qualifying energy sources, including biomass, does not lead to increased carbon emissions or the degradation of our nation's forests, grasslands, and wildlife habitat. America can no longer sit on the sidelines while other countries race forward toward a clean energy future. This bipartisan legislation represents a good foundation upon which to build and should move forward as drafted.

Home Star

The Home Star residential energy efficiency program will save people money, create jobs, and reduce pollution. It is a direct investment in the American people, giving them voluntary incentives to improve their homes. Doing so will create over one hundred thousand jobs, many in the hard-hit construction industry.

Building Star

Similar to Home Star, but crafted to encourage commercial energy efficiency improvements, Building Star can leave a dramatic imprint on American small businesses and building owners by cutting their costs while greatly reducing our nation's energy use and creating over one hundred thousand jobs.

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Job-Creating Tax Policies

Tax incentives can be key policies for creating jobs and moving our country to clean energy. In particular, the Advanced Manufacturing Tax Credit (48c), which has been included in the proposed Bingaman-Snowe Advanced Energy Tax Incentives Act (S. 3935), and the treasury grant program, which provides payments for specified energy property in lieu of tax credits, should be extended with the inclusion of Davis-Bacon prevailing wage protections. In addition, the manufacturing tax credit should include a focus on manufacturing job creation as embodied by Sen. Sherrod Brown's SEAM Act. An extension of these credits will immediately create and maintain good jobs in the clean energy manufacturing sector.

Safety and Health

The Robert C. Byrd Miner Safety and Health Act (S. 3671) is a fitting tribute to the memory of the late Senator and an overdue reform of our nation's mine and other workplace safety and health laws. The tragic deaths of 29 coal miners in the Massey Upper Big Branch mine in West Virginia, and 7 refinery workers in Anacortes, Washington, demonstrate the need for improved occupational safety and health protections for new and exiting jobs as we rebuild our economy.

Advanced Technology Vehicle Manufacturing (ATVM) Loans

Section 136 of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 established a direct loan program to support certain engineering and retooling costs associated with the domestic production of advanced technology vehicles and their key components. The program authorized \$25 billion in loans, which the Department of Energy expects to exhaust soon. The ATVM program is a huge success, with the \$8.3 billion in loans committed to date supporting 38,000 U.S. auto sector jobs. Advanced technology vehicle manufacturing loans should be extended, with updates to eligibility criteria, to assist the retooling of the U.S. auto industry to develop the technologies we need to reduce our dependence on oil, meet consumer demand for cleaner vehicles and position itself as a leader in the global auto market.

Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund

The Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds provides loans for the construction of wastewater and drinking water facilities, nonpoint source pollution control, water efficiency projects and estuary protection projects. Since its inception these programs have provided local communities with cumulative assistance surpassing \$80 billion, creating tens of thousands of jobs and ensuring Americans have safe drinking water and clean waterways. To ensure that these remain good jobs, prevailing wage coverage should be applied on all subsequent rounds of funding. Water infrastructure investment must not be disrupted by politics, especially as our economy regains solid footing.