

Repair America's Schools

Repair America

Last year, Superstorm Sandy gave us a glimpse of our climate future, wreaking havoc across New York and New Jersey. This one storm forced the closure of all 1,750 New York City public schools for an entire week. And unfortunately, there is more extreme weather to come. From roads that buckle to water pipelines that burst to schools that are not fit for our children, our day-to-day systems are not built to withstand the impacts of a changing climate.

The BlueGreen Alliance (BGA), with its 14 national labor and environmental partners — including the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) — launched *Repair America*, a grassroots campaign to rebuild our nation's infrastructure to address the increasing threat of climate change. Schools are an important focus of these efforts.

The Problem

The American Society of Civil Engineers gave the nation's infrastructure a "D" rating this year, calling for over \$3 trillion in needed improvements. More severe weather will very likely add to this bill as we continue to see failures in our vital infrastructure system.

Public schools have long been a neglected part of our infrastructure system. That neglect is taking a toll on the health and safety of our students, teachers and other school personnel. Extreme weather events will likely increase the potential for harmful exposure of these individuals if they are called to return to storm-damaged buildings. We've already seen upticks in asthma and other respiratory illnesses in students who occupied buildings damaged by Superstorm Sandy, Hurricanes Katrina and Irene, and tornados in Alabama and Missouri.

In addition, old and inefficient schools are further contributing to the root causes of climate change by wasting energy and adding to our air more of the carbon pollution that drives climate change. Investing in school infrastructure will help our communities mitigate the impact of climate change as well as adapt to it.

The Solution

We can lift up schools as models of the clean, green, resilient environments we need at the heart of our efforts to rebuild a nation that is better able to address, prepare for and recover from the effects of climate change. This is no small task, but we can be successful if we work together with allied labor, environmental and business organizations. We can put a skilled workforce into action to build better infrastructure that is smarter, safer and more efficient. We need buildings and systems that can withstand the test of time — as well as the extreme weather associated with a changing climate.

What You Can Do

Your AFT affiliate may be contacting you with an invitation to a *Repair America* event in your community. If you can, attend and join fellow union members, environmentalists, and other concerned citizens in your community to call for local, state and national action to respond to the threat of climate change. Together, we can:

- Build a broad labor, environmental, and business coalition to push for modernizing every school in our country, safeguarding our communities from the impacts of climate change, and creating and securing good jobs for American workers, including millions of teachers and other school employees.
- Help educate our friends, family and neighbors about the economic and environmental benefits of repairing the systems that Americans rely on every day — from energy transmission to transit and transportation to our vast network of public school buildings.
- Advocate for action at the local, state and national level to modernize our schools and other key parts of our infrastructure to ensure that we address the critical health, safety, environmental and economic concerns.

Find out how you can get involved at www.bluegreenalliance.org/repair.