

Five Priorities for the State of the Union

Before the President Obama delivers his State of the Union address, the BlueGreen Alliance is putting forward five priorities for 2015 to create quality, family-sustaining jobs and protect the environment.

The State of the Union speech is a chance to hit the reset button on America's priorities for the next year. Starting off the year right means we are all looking for new solutions to the challenges and opportunities that have been presented to us. As the president said in last year's State of the Union speech, "There are millions of Americans outside Washington who are tired of stale political arguments and are moving this country forward."

The BlueGreen Alliance has outlined five priorities for 2015. They are:

ENERGY POLICY: ADOPT A STRONG NATIONAL METHANE REDUCTION STRATEGY

The Obama administration recently announced a goal of reducing methane emissions by up to 45 percent by 2025. Achieving this could save the natural gas equivalent to 33 million tons of carbon pollution per year, and addresses reducing methane emissions not only in the energy sector but across the U.S. economy.

Methane is a potent source of climate change pollution, and taking steps to reduce emissions is a substantial opportunity to put American workers squarely at the forefront of developing, manufacturing, and implementing emission reduction technologies—providing high-quality jobs and stimulating local economies. The challenge is for the administration to stay on track and outline the specific ways federal agencies will achieve their goal. Attaining the reductions announced in this proposal would be a significant step toward realizing the vast potential American workers and technology can deliver to move the U.S. to a clean energy economy.

CLEAN POWER PLAN: SECURE GOOD JOBS IN THE TRANSITION TO A STRONG CLEAN ECONOMY

Last summer the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) unveiled the Clean Power Plan. The plan sets new targets to reduce carbon pollution from existing power plants. As it is

finalized, it must include a community resilience strategy to help workers negotiate a fair and just transition to the clean economy. We would be missing an important opportunity unless we choose to invest in both the economic and environmental needs of this and future generations. It's up to the president to set the right tone on this issue.

TRANSPORTATION: PASS A LONG-TERM, FULLY FUNDED TRANSPORTATION BILL

In August, Congress brought the Highway Trust Fund to the brink and along with it, threatened 700,000 jobs. The Highway Trust Fund was renewed, but for only a few months. Soon enough, we'll be right back where we were on highway and transit funding. We need a long-term, fully funded solution today that could create millions of jobs.

REPAIR AMERICA: STOP DEFERRING INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS

America's infrastructure is in dire need of repair and it is past time to modernize the systems we rely on every day for energy, water, and communications both to address climate change and to create quality, family-sustaining jobs. Repairing our infrastructure is vital to the competitiveness of America's economy.

TRADE: DON'T SACRIFICE AMERICA'S HISTORICALLY STRONG ENVIRONMENTAL AND LABOR STANDARDS

Trade policies have long-lasting implications and should be negotiated with an eye toward fairness and transparency—and with the best interests of American workers at the forefront. If we're not careful, Congress' adherence to the "Fast Track" procedure will leave America's working families holding the bag on bad trade policies for a long time to come.