

## Greening the Future with Green-Collar Jobs

People are increasingly concerned about the consequences of climate change for the ecosystem. What is less well understood is that climate change is more than an environmental issue. It's also about jobs, economic growth and opportunity.

In the new green economy, there will be a huge need for workers to install solar panels, build wind turbines, lay insulation and bring more energy-efficient lighting and appliances to homes and businesses across America. Greening the future will require thousands and thousands of green-collar jobs – those positions created by the need to improve environmental quality.

Renewable energy is a great example. As solar, wind, geothermal and biomass energy become larger parts of the energy mix, there will be new jobs in research and development; sales, marketing and customer service; business support services; manufacturing, installation and construction, to name only a few.

In addition, the potential expansion of nuclear power – already by far the nation's largest source of carbon emissions-free electric generation – will require an enormous number of workers, from nuclear scientists and engineers to construction and maintenance workers. There is already strong competition for skilled workers in the nuclear industry – and this will only intensify.

Energy companies have older-than-average workforces. They will need to replace an entire generation of retiring employees without losing the valuable skills that go into providing safe, reliable energy. At the same time, there is the need to prepare a new workforce to power a green economy with clean energy. It will be no small undertaking to develop a diverse, well-trained and ready pool of candidates for green jobs while continuing to strengthen our energy infrastructure.

The utility industry, which has long been one of the nation's largest employers, is reinforcing its emphasis on workforce development. It is reaching out in new ways to partner with the military, professional associations, community organizations, and colleges and universities to expand the talent pipeline – with a strong focus on expanding opportunities for job creation and economic development in our cities.

Climate change is not only an environmental challenge, but an economic and employment opportunity. By acting now, New Jersey can be a leader in charting a new path of sustainable growth – and creating plenty of good, locally based jobs.

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