

The Clean Energy Worker Just Transition Act

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For decades, workers in America have been under attack. Whether its trade policies that have shipped jobs overseas or attacks on workers' labor rights, as a result of our disastrous unfettered "free trade" policies, almost 60,000 factories have been shut down and over 4.7 million decent-paying manufacturing jobs have been lost since 2001. As of July 2015, only 12.3 million workers in the United States were employed in the manufacturing sector, lower than July, 1941.

Coal jobs are also on the decline due to increased costs, lower prices, competition from cheaper natural gas, and the public's desire to move to cleaner sources of energy. These job losses have been concentrated in regions of the country, like Appalachia, that are already struggling economically. For example, through the third quarter of 2015, Kentucky mining jobs fell by about 7,000, to around 10,000. In May 2015, Murray Energy Corp., the country's largest privately held coal mining company, said more than 1,000 workers were laid off in Ohio, Illinois and West Virginia. Several major coal companies have filed for bankruptcy in 2015 alone.

These patterns are not sustainable. We have a national responsibility to protect the livelihoods of the working families and communities who have helped power and build this country. We must act now to reenergize our manufacturing base, bolster our green economy, and protect the livelihoods of these workers and the communities they support.

We must not only create new jobs for workers who have lost work, but we must ensure that those new jobs are good jobs, meaning they pay a family-sustaining wage, they provide health care and retirement benefits, they are safe, and the workers who hold them have a powerful voice on the job. Moreover, we must create these jobs in the same communities that are suffering. While workers are transitioning to new employment, they must receive protections to maintain family-level wages, health care, and pensions until they are able to start their new jobs. Further, workers need support in connecting with new jobs and the opportunity to learn new skills through vocational education programs. In addition, communities must have the infrastructure to attract new investment that provides those jobs.

The Clean Energy Worker Just Transition Act achieves these goals, and covers the \$41 billion costs of implementing these protections by closing the tax loophole that allows corporations to ship their headquarters overseas to avoid paying taxes.

Summary of Bill Provisions:

Section 1: Eligibility

- Workers are eligible when transitioning between jobs or are underemployed.
- Workers maintain eligibility until they have a salary, pension, and health care benefits package within 10% of the previous benefits package.
- For the first 5 years, coal workers are eligible. Then, if 20% or more jobs are lost in other energy sectors, then eligibility opens for those workers as well.

Section 2: Benefits

- For up to three years, workers receive unemployment insurance, health care, and pension based on their previous salary.
- Workers may receive job training, health care, and living expenses for up to four years.
- If a worker is ready to retire, they may opt for pension support and health care.
- Employers receive tax credits to incentivize hiring transitioning employees.

Section 3: Targeted Investments in Coal Country

Once 35 or more workers in a county become eligible for the program created by this Act, that county becomes eligible to apply for targeted, need-based development funds through an inter-agency effort spearheaded by the Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA). Funds will be allocated through:

- Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) to assist economic growth in Appalachian communities. Appalachian communities most affected by coal economy transition will receive \$40 million annually for a range of economic development planning and implementation activities.
- Department of Commerce, Economic Development Assistance Programs (EDAP) to assist economically distressed communities by fostering an environment conducive to job creation and economic growth. The Act includes \$10 million annually to coordinate federal economic development funds government-wide. The agency will take a leadership role in planning and coordination to communities and federal agencies.
- In order to address the continuing legacy of coal abandoned mine lands (AML) on the health, safety, environment and economic development potential of communities, the Act provides \$250 million annually to States and Tribes for the reclamation of abandoned coal mine land sites and associated polluted waters in a manner that promotes sustainable redevelopment in economically distressed coal country communities. OSMRE will seek input from States, Tribes and other stakeholders as it finalizes details of this proposal.
- The remainder (\$7 billion over 10 years) goes to eligible counties for water, broadband, and electric grid infrastructure investments.

Section 4: Workplace Protections for ALL Workers

- Promotes community outreach and mandate workplaces to inform workers of the existence of clean energy worker protections.
- Makes it easier for workers to unionize by requiring only a majority of eligible workers to sign authorizations with the National Labor Relations Board.
- Mandates companies to negotiate within 10 days of union certification and provides the option of mediation after 90 days and the option of arbitration after 30 days following.

If you have questions, or your boss would like to co-sponsor the Clean Energy Worker Just Transition Act, please contact Katie Thomas at katie_thomas@sanders.senate.gov or call 4-5141.