

# Bridging the Equity Gap

Driving Community Health Outcomes  
Through the Green Jobs Movement

Prepared for The California Endowment by Green For All



April 2010

© 2010, Green For All.

Green For All is dedicated to improving the lives of all Americans through a clean-energy economy. The national organization works in collaboration with the business, government, labor, and grassroots communities to create and implement programs that increase quality jobs and opportunities in green industry — all while holding the most vulnerable people at the center of its agenda.

*[www.greenforall.org](http://www.greenforall.org)*

Green For All is grateful to Working Partnerships USA for compiling the three case studies incorporated into this report. Working Partnerships USA is a public policy organization located in San Jose that was created by a coalition of labor, community, and faith organizations. WPUSA seeks to develop local policy initiatives that improve the quality of life for working families and can easily be replicated in other regions throughout California.

*[www.wpusa.org](http://www.wpusa.org)*

Green For All would also like to thank Working Partnerships USA (WPUSA), Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE), and the East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy (EBASE) for sharing their experiences leading campaigns for good, green jobs that will improve health, wealth and security outcomes for low-income communities and communities of color in California. EBASE and LAANE would also like to thank The California Endowment for its financial support of the Campaign for Clean And Safe Ports in Oakland and Los Angeles, respectively.

This report was made possible by the generous support of The California Endowment Foundation. The California Endowment is a private, statewide health foundation committed to expanding access to affordable, quality healthcare for underserved individuals and communities, and to promoting fundamental improvements in the health status of all Californians.

*[www.calendow.org](http://www.calendow.org)*

# Contents

Executive Summary .....	1
I. Introduction .....	4
A. Shaping the Transition to a Green Economy for Broader Health Outcomes.....	4
B. The Green Jobs Movement and Community Health .....	5
1. Defining “Green Jobs” .....	5
2. The Green Jobs Movement .....	6
3. Green Jobs and Health — the Relationship Between Income and Health Status .....	7
II. Promising Practices from the Front Lines of the Green Jobs Movement: Three Case Studies.....	9
A. Santa Clara County Green Pays: Shaping the Growth of New Industry.....	10
1. Addressing Climate Change and High Unemployment.....	10
2. Implementation and Scaling-Up.....	11
3. Job Training and Worker Health and Safety Protections .....	12
4. Creating New Job Standards.....	12
5. Ensuring a Healthy Community .....	12
B. Campaign for Clean and Safe Ports in Oakland: Driving National Policy Change for Community Health Benefits.....	13
1. Addressing Pervasive Health Hazards for Workers and the Community.....	13
2. Organizing For Community Health and Worker Protections .....	15
3. A Winning Coalition Driving Federal Policy Change .....	16
C. Waste and Recycling Campaign in Los Angeles: Greening the Dirtiest of Environmental Jobs.....	16
1. The Reality Behind the Waste and Recycling Stream .....	16
2. Forging a Coalition Around Reforming the Waste Industry .....	18
3. Establishing New Health Standards for Workers .....	18
4. Raising Standards for the Environment and Community Health.....	18
III. Driving Systems Change Through the Green Jobs Movement.....	20
IV. The Current Policy Environment and the Potential for Change.....	22
A. Key Trends Influencing the Green Jobs Movement .....	22
B. The National, State and Local Policy Environment .....	23
V. Conclusion .....	25

## Executive Summary

The fundamental link between poverty and health mandates a new approach to both, one capable of raising community health standards by lifting individuals, families and communities out of poverty. Merely providing access to healthcare does not address fundamental societal inequities that translate into greater health risks and more extensive exposure to environmental hazards for low-income communities and communities of color — risks aggravated by climate change. We need to address these fundamental inequities if we hope to achieve The California Endowment’s goal of *Building Healthy Communities*.

### Transitioning to a Healthy and Inclusive Green Economy

In *Bridging the Equity Gap: Driving Community Health Outcomes Through the Green Jobs Movement*, Green For All makes the case that the Green Jobs Movement — a broad, progressive coalition of environmental and health advocates, social justice and civil rights organizations, labor and community-based groups, and business — can bring about a systems change to improve economic, environmental and health conditions for low-income communities. Now is the moment to leverage unprecedented levels of public investment and policy attention to create green jobs capable of improving health outcomes. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) and the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB32) are two key pieces of legislation that can create opportunities by directing millions of dollars towards the creation of an environmentally sustainable economy.

Green jobs can increase occupational health standards through safety training, equipment, and mechanisms to ensure a healthy workplace. They can create pathways into the middle class by providing prevailing-wage employment with health benefits and workforce development practices that improve career-track opportunities as jobs transform. And they can improve the overall health of low-income communities by decreasing pollution levels and creating healthier neighborhoods, among other environmental benefits.

### Case Studies: Promising Practices that Drive Systems Change

*Bridging the Equity Gap* presents three case studies. Each examines an active campaign that demonstrates the kind of broad health outcomes and systemic change that the Green Jobs Movement can drive. The campaigns explicitly aim to set job-quality standards, upgrade health and safety conditions, and improve wealth, health, and security in low-income communities. The community-based campaigns highlight

promising practices from the Green Jobs Movement and potential models for large-scale replication.

## Volatility of the Current Policy Environment & Need for Statewide Mobilization Efforts

Across the country, local examples demonstrate the potential of a green economy to transform the lives of all Americans, particularly the most vulnerable among us. However, the economic recession has helped create a volatile political environment where the transition to a green economy is challenged as ‘job killing.’ California is the key battleground in the fight for effective climate policy, providing ripe opportunity for systems change that has sparked a backlash against future job, health and environmental gains benefitting low-income communities and communities of color. How well the Green Jobs Movement engages this threat will have ripple effects throughout the nation. A statewide mobilization campaign with the message to protect public health and fight pollution will be critical to defeat our opponents’ messaging of fear.

## National, State and Local Policies Capable of Promoting TCE’s Vision

At the federal and state levels, climate policy debates provide opportunities to intervene on behalf of low-income communities and communities of color. Additional legislative opportunities in energy efficiency and infrastructure at the national, state and local levels provide promising avenues to advance broad health, environmental and green jobs gains, including:

- Nearly two-thirds of ARRA funds remain unspent and funding awards for key programs such as \$454 million in competitive Energy Efficiency Community Block Grants (EECBG) have yet to be announced. Green For All has worked with six cities to build strong targeted-hiring elements into their applications for EECBG funds.
- Green For All has led a successful effort to include quality-assurance and targeted-hiring language in legislation that would create a \$6 billion Home Star Residential Retrofit Program with the potential to create 138,000 jobs nationwide. With these provisions, the program can expand the number of low-income and minority individuals hired to perform home audits, as well as decrease energy costs for low-income households and reduce home health threats.
- The \$3.1 billion energy-efficiency fund, administered by the California Public Utilities Commission and ratepayer funded, presents a significant

opportunity to ensure broader benefits for low-income communities. Placing standards on this fund, including targeted-hiring and -marketing requirements, will ensure that this investment benefits low-income residents and communities.

- Reauthorization of the \$500 billion federal Transportation Act also presents a critical opportunity to steer investment toward the creation of healthier communities through increased investments in transit and incentives for smart-growth development. Green For All has joined efforts to support smart-growth provisions and is currently working with Transportation For America to ensure greater access to public transportation for low-income communities, address health inequities and promote overall job growth.
- State and federal investments in water infrastructure could also create thousands of green jobs over the next two decades as cities address crumbling sewer and storm drain systems, non-point source pollution, contaminated groundwater sources, and the need for more integrated water reuse and recycling approaches. The trend towards green infrastructure could also lead to the redesign of streets that include more bike lanes and trees and other plantings to capture storm water. In addition, green infrastructure may promote more active and healthy environments as communities reclaim space from automobiles for open spaces that can act as detention basins and ponds for stormwater infiltration and double as recreational facilities during dry weather.

# I. Introduction

## A. Shaping the Transition to a Green Economy for Broader Health Outcomes

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB32), and growing cleantech venture capital investments are directing unprecedented resources and policy attention towards the nation's transition to a more environmentally sustainable economy.<sup>1</sup> This investment presents a significant opportunity to improve health outcomes for low-income communities and communities of color. But we cannot take advantage of this opportunity unless we directly address the environmental health and equity implications of climate change mitigation. In fact, without intervention, the transition to a green economy could reinforce and amplify disparities, limit the economic opportunities of low-income, minority and politically marginalized groups, and exacerbate environmental health burdens borne by our nation's most vulnerable populations.<sup>2</sup>

Several factors have made California the central battleground in the contest for our nation's future: its landmark AB32 legislation; its status as the leading source of cleantech venture capital; the cutting-edge breadth of labor, community and environmental coalitions that have formed in its leading cities; and the depths of the state's economic downturn and fiscal crisis.

Most recently, California's vaunted initiative process has placed the state at the center of efforts to stoke a national backlash against environmental regulations. Two Texas-based oil companies have contributed hundred of thousands of dollars to qualify an initiative for the November 2010 ballot that would suspend implementation of AB32 until the unemployment rate in California declines to 5.5% for four consecutive quarters.<sup>3</sup> The

---

1 The Pew Charitable Trust. "The Clean Energy Economy." *Clean Economy Report*, June 2009; Green For All, PolicyLink, *Bringing Home the Green Recovery: A User's Guide to the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*, 2009. <http://www.greenforall.org/resources/recoveryusersguide>

2 Shonkoff, Seth B. and Rachel Morello-Frosch, Manuel Pastor. "Minding the Climate Gap: Environmental Health and Equity Implications of Climate Change Mitigation Policies in California." *Environmental Justice*, December 2009. <http://www.liebertonline.com/doi/abs/10.1089/env.2009.0030>

3 Broder, John M. and Clifford Krauss. "Texas Oil Firms Oppose California Climate Law," *New York Times*. April 7, 2010.

key argument underpinning this initiative is that AB32 will cost hundreds of billions of dollars to implement and will eliminate millions of jobs.<sup>4</sup>

In the face of these attempts to set-up a classic (and outdated) “jobs versus the environment” debate, the coalitions emerging from the progressive Green Jobs Movement provide the most promising avenue for ensuring that the transition to a green economy produces positive outcomes for California’s most vulnerable populations. This report presents three case studies. Each examines an active campaign that demonstrates the kind of broad health outcomes and systemic change that the Green Jobs Movement can drive. The campaigns explicitly aim to set job-quality standards, upgrade health and safety conditions, and improve wealth, health, and security in low-income communities. The community-based campaigns highlight promising practices from the Green Jobs Movement and potential models for large-scale replication.

## B. The Green Jobs Movement and Community Health

### 1. Defining “Green Jobs”

There is no official definition of a “green job,” and very little consensus exists among stakeholders with definitions that best suit their specific (and often differing) agendas.<sup>5</sup> As they debate the pace and direction of the transition to a low-carbon economy, business, industry, labor, and economic justice groups are all vying to define “green jobs.” Some groups advocate for a sector-based definition. Others promote a broader view of sustainability that focuses on job-quality inputs.

In this report, we define a green job as one that preserves and enhances environmental conditions through the product that is manufactured, the service that is provided, or through a cleaner and healthier production or service-delivery process, while providing family-supporting wages, career-track opportunities and entry into the middle class.<sup>6</sup> Under this formulation, green jobs may include new jobs in emerging and new

---

4 Buchanan, Wyatt. “Legislative Analyst rips business reports.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 19, 2010. <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/03/18/BAPS1CI26G.DTL>

5 For example, see Morriss, Andrew P., William T. Bogart, Andrew Dorchak, and Roger E. Meiners. “7 Myths About Green Jobs.” *U Illinois Law & Economics Research Paper* No. LE09-007, March 11, 2009. Case Legal Studies Research Paper No. 09-14. <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1357440>

6 Center for American Progress. *From Poverty to Prosperity: A National Strategy to Cut Poverty in Half*. 2007; Palmese, Racquel. “Lighting the Way for the New Green Economy: A Conversation with the Apollo Alliance’s Carla Din.” *Green Technology Magazine*, 2008. [http://www.green-technology.org/green-technology-magazine/carla\\_din.htm](http://www.green-technology.org/green-technology-magazine/carla_din.htm) Din attributes the following definition of green jobs to Phil Angelides: “It has to pay decent benefits and wages that can support a family. It has to be part of a real career path with upward mobility, and it needs to reduce waste and pollution and benefit the environment.”



industries created as a result of technological advancements in the green economy, as well as existing jobs that are being transformed (e.g., construction trades transformed by energy-efficiency retrofitting work or manufacturing jobs transformed by more sustainable production processes).<sup>7</sup>

## 2. The Green Jobs Movement

We use the term “Green Jobs Movement” in this report to describe broad, progressive coalitions that organize to improve environmental and health conditions and press for policies, programs and investments that create green jobs. These coalitions may include environmental and health advocates, social justice and civil rights organizations, labor, community-based groups, and business. The Green Jobs Movement is propositional rather than oppositional — i.e., it is focused on solutions and not just on opposing projects. Instead, it proposes specific interventions to leverage government funding and policies to improve the economic and health outcomes of low- and middle-income communities and communities of color.

The Green Jobs Movement aligns neatly with The California Endowment’s approach to building healthy communities. *The California Endowment’s Strategic Vision 2010-2020: Building Healthy Communities* outlines ten outcomes to measure the success of its ambitious ten-year plan to “improve health systems and the physical, social, economic and service structures that support healthy living and healthy behaviors in California.”<sup>8</sup> Three of the ten outcomes directly link community health to the built environment and economic development, the core elements underlying the Green Jobs Movement.<sup>9</sup>

The *Building Healthy Communities* approach acknowledges a fundamental link between poverty and health, and extends beyond providing access to healthcare to improve health status. It calls for systems change to raise community health standards by lifting individuals, families, and communities out of poverty. Similarly, the Green Jobs Movement seeks to raise community health standards through systems change by ensuring that the transition to a green economy addresses fundamental societal inequities in both environmental conditions and economic opportunity.

---

7 This formulation draws on the work of Manuel Pastor and his colleagues at the USC Center for Sustainable Cities as discussed in “Green Health Equity: A New Framework for Creating Healthy Jobs and Sustainable Communities” written by Professor Akom and Seth Miller and prepared as a draft working paper for The California Endowment.

8 The California Endowment. “Building Health Communities, Planning for Place Partnerships,” RFP 2009.

9 “The California Endowment, Building Healthy Communities Outcome Resource Guides.” The three most relevant outcomes are: Outcome Four: Residents Live in Communities with Health-Promoting Land Use, Transportation and Community Development; Outcome Seven: Neighborhood and School Environments Support Improved Health and Healthy Behaviors; and Outcome Eight: Community Health Improvements Are Linked to Economic Development. <http://www.calendow.org/healthycommunities/>

### 3. Green Jobs and Health — the Relationship Between Income and Health Status

Public and environmental health research literature cites income as one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of health and disease.<sup>10</sup> For example, residents of low-income communities and communities of color are much more likely to be exposed to harmful levels of airborne toxins and dust.<sup>11</sup> “Various aspects of social inequality have contributed to the greater burden of environmental hazard exposure and health risks for communities of color and the poor. Social inequality, such as residential segregation, may affect the options that communities have to address environmental and health problems.”<sup>12</sup>

The Green Jobs Movement can directly address this link. It can broadly improve health outcomes by increasing the options available to communities via three main avenues:

- Creating Pathways Out of Poverty: Green jobs tend to provide better pay, more security, and training and workforce development practices that upgrade skill levels and improve career-track opportunities. They are also more likely to be union jobs<sup>13</sup> and to offer employer-based health benefits, thereby improving access to healthcare for workers and their families.
- Improved Health and Safety Standards: Higher-paid jobs promote worker safety and health standards,<sup>14</sup> especially in a union shop. This includes training to decrease the risk of injury, access to safety equipment, as well as ongoing education to promote a safe workplace culture. The collective bargaining process in a unionized work setting can also provide a vehicle to strengthen those standards as needed over time, thereby regularly enhancing health outcomes.

---

10 For example, see “The Humboldt County General Plan, Healthy Economy Indicators.” [http://www.humanimpact.org/HumboldtGPUHIA/HumboldtGPUHIA\\_Economy\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.humanimpact.org/HumboldtGPUHIA/HumboldtGPUHIA_Economy_FINAL.pdf)

11 Sharp, R. & Walker, B. “The Clean Air Color Line: Why Non-Anglo Californians Will Benefit From New State Particulate Standards.” *Environmental Working Group*, June 2002. [http://www.ewg.org/files/particlecivics2\\_report.pdf](http://www.ewg.org/files/particlecivics2_report.pdf)

12 Rachel Morello-Frosch, et al., “Environmental Justice and Regional Inequality in Southern California: Implications for Future Research,” *Environmental Health Perspectives* Volume 110, April 2002.

13 The Vice President of the U.S Middle Class Task Force, “Staff Report, Green Jobs: A Pathway to a Strong Middle Class.” [http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/Middle\\_Class\\_Task\\_Force\\_Green\\_Jobs\\_Update.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/Middle_Class_Task_Force_Green_Jobs_Update.pdf)

14 The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Socioeconomic Status and Health, “Reaching for a Healthier Life: Facts on Socioeconomic Status and Health in the U.S,” 2007. <http://www.macses.ucsf.edu/News/NEWS.html>

- Improved Community Health: Improving the physical environment and health conditions of low-income neighborhoods and communities of color is usually a central element of a Green Jobs Movement campaign. The positive spillover effects or co-benefits of higher job standards are also significant in making these communities healthier. Families with higher incomes are better able to transform their communities into places that support and encourage healthy living. They are able to make better health choices through increased buying power that may access healthier food options. They can afford to live in a built environment conducive to walking and exercising with better housing, better air quality, less poverty and violence, and increased access to public transportation.<sup>15</sup>

---

15 The California Endowment. Building Health Communities Outcome Resource Guides Four, Seven and Eight. <http://www.calendow.org/healthycommunities>

## II. Promising Practices from the Front Lines of the Green Jobs Movement: Three Case Studies

In this section, we examine three community-based campaigns that illustrate the potential of the Green Jobs Movement to deliver positive health outcomes for individuals, families and communities. These campaigns aim to transform existing jobs into green jobs, while improving the immediate environment of low-income and minority neighborhoods.

In addition to increasing workplace health and safety standards, creating pathways out of poverty, and creating overall healthier communities, these case studies also highlight promising practices that have the potential for broader replication and systems change, including:

- (1) Leveraging energy-efficiency retrofit programs for high-road jobs and localized benefits to low- and middle-income communities. (Green Pays in Santa Clara)
- (2) Building a state-of-the art environmental, labor, and community coalition that may affect not only local job and community health outcomes, but may influence federal goods movement policy with even broader health impacts. (Port of Oakland campaign)
- (3) Greening a growth sector that would otherwise produce low-wage, dirty jobs that threaten the health of the vulnerable populations employed in them and the communities in which they are located. (Los Angeles Waste and Recycling campaign)

These case studies demonstrate the importance of genuine community engagement and organizing, and the power of broad-based progressive coalitions to effect policy change at the local, state and federal level. Community engagement is essential for systems change but it must be complemented with interventions to leverage political power structures. These interventions can take many forms, including collective bargaining, community benefits agreements and/or legislation.

## A. Santa Clara County Green Pays:<sup>1</sup> Shaping the Growth of New Industry

### 1. Addressing Climate Change and High Unemployment

The Santa Clara County Green Pays program aims to address high unemployment in the construction trades while cutting greenhouse gas emissions by establishing Green Pays, a county-scale energy-efficiency retrofit program that incorporates wage and community health standards at the earliest stage of program development.

The current recession has been hard on the construction industry in Santa Clara County, home of Silicon Valley and the major source of “cleantech” venture capital. Unemployment in many occupations exceeds 30% and shows little sign of improving in the near future. A predominantly male and Latino sector, the construction industry has suffered a dramatic decline in employment that has devastated thousands of families throughout the county, particularly in the poorest neighborhoods.

Energy-efficiency retrofits present an opportunity to counter the recessionary decline in construction employment. Buildings represent nearly 40% of primary energy use and 40% of all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the United States.<sup>2</sup> Simple, relatively low-cost measures such as air sealing, insulation, and lighting and appliance upgrades can reduce energy use in almost every building.<sup>3</sup> Workers with less than a four-year college degree can be trained to retrofit



- 
- 1 Information for the Santa Clara County Green Pays case study is based on an interview conducted with Louise Auerhahn at Working Partnerships USA.
  - 2 Environmental Information Administration. “EIA Annual Energy Outlook 2008.” Energy Information Administration. “Assumptions to the Annual Energy Outlook 2008.”
  - 3 Green for All and Center on Wisconsin Strategy. *A Short Guide to Setting Up a City-Scale Retrofit Program*, 2009. <http://www.greenforall.org/resources/a-short-guide-to-setting-up-a-city-scale-retrofit>

a building and reduce its energy use by 30% or more. Energy-efficiency improvements are one of the lowest-cost and most cost-effective opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; they result in a net benefit or savings to the economy over the life of the improvements.<sup>4</sup>

Green Pays is helping develop a significant market for energy-efficiency building retrofits in Santa Clara County with the intent of institutionalizing sustainable jobs. Developed by a local community collaborative led by Working Partnerships USA, the Green Pays concept has been designed to meet “triple bottom line” measures of success: economic prosperity, environmental health, and equity. It will lower the energy bills of participating homeowners and provide returns to investors who finance the up-front cost of the retrofit program. It will benefit the environment by reducing building energy use, thus lowering demand for energy generation and the greenhouse gas emissions it creates. Finally, Green Pays will benefit low- and middle-income communities through affordable home retrofits and high-quality green jobs.

## **2. Implementation and Scaling-Up**

Santa Clara County has adopted the Green Pays concept, has secured initial grant funding, and is currently developing the program. Formal adoption of the program is expected within a few months. Implementation will be gradual with a target of 500 retrofitted homes in the first phase, 750 homes in the second phase, and scaling up to a target of all 220,000 eligible homes in the county. Santa Clara County will pay special attention to making the program accessible to its estimated 40,000 low-income homeowners through community education and outreach, as well as financing mechanisms that will enable families to benefit from the program without a substantial out-of-pocket investment. Altogether, Green Pays has the potential to generate more than 1,700 construction jobs, all providing sustainable wage and benefit packages.

Green Pays is being designed as a financially self-sustaining program using a financing tool that involves little to no up-front cost to property owners and thus has the potential to generate substantial demand for retrofits. The County will create a voluntary contractual assessment district to allow property owners to finance energy-efficiency building retrofits through assessments on their property tax bills. This mechanism, known as property assessed clean energy (PACE), will attract private seed capital to pay for the up-front costs of the retrofits. Property owners will be offered low-interest loans that will be tied to their property and thus will not be considered personal debt. The loan is transferable upon sale of the property and the program should require minimal expense to the County after initial development.

---

4 Jon Creyts et al. “Reducing U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions: How Much at What Cost?” McKinsey & Company, 2007.



### **3. Job Training and Worker Health and Safety Protections**

Green Pays will incorporate basic training and safety requirements to avoid costly injury and illness to the local workforce. Workers must receive safety training, including a ten-hour Occupational Safety Health Administration (OSHA) course. Contractors with previous health and safety violations are prohibited from participating.

To ensure that the program creates jobs that benefit local disadvantaged residents, Green Pays will include a targeted-hiring program that focuses training and job creation in low-income communities. It will also create incentives for contractors to work with local apprenticeship programs in order to build career pathways into the green construction industry for trainees.

### **4. Creating New Job Standards**

All participating Green Pays contractors and sub-contractors must pay at least 250% of the California minimum wage for entry-level work, with higher standards for advanced work to encourage wage progression for workers. The combination of sustainable wages, benefits and career training programs will create pathways out of poverty for many residents and their families.

### **5. Ensuring a Healthy Community**

In addition to providing the generalized benefit of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, Green Pays will provide significant health benefits to residents by offering services that reduce energy costs and help decrease home health threats such as asthma and exposure to mold. In addition to installing solar panels, weather stripping, replacing waters, repairing roofs, and cleaning furnace ducts, workers will also assess if additional repairs are needed to remove asbestos or lead paint. A robust community-outreach program and the use of PACE financing will ensure that the energy savings and other benefits of Green Pays reach low-income communities.

## B. Campaign for Clean and Safe Ports in Oakland:<sup>5</sup> Driving National Policy Change for Community Health Benefits

### 1. Addressing Pervasive Health Hazards for Workers and the Community

The Port of Oakland is one of the largest economic engines in the San Francisco Bay Area, generating billions of dollars in economic activity each year. Despite this economic benefit, the Port's hundreds of truck drivers work as independent contractors, earn low wages, and receive no health benefits or worker protections. The Port is also one of the largest polluters in the region, generating significant community health concerns for its neighbors in West Oakland and other low-income communities.



Port drivers face a variety of challenges and health risks. Over the last two decades, trucking companies have shifted drivers from employees to “independent contractors,” thus avoiding payroll taxes, Social Security, Medicare, and workers’ compensation contributions. The companies have shed responsibility for their fleets as well. Port drivers must purchase or lease their own trucks and pay for vehicle maintenance, fuel, registration, insurance, and other costs.<sup>6</sup> Because drivers are paid by the load and not by the hour, their pay averages \$10.69 per hour but can dip as low as \$8 per hour. Given their low earnings, many drivers can afford only old, polluting trucks that are poorly maintained and unsafe. More than two-thirds of Port truck drivers do not have access to job-based health insurance, which means the vast majority go uninsured.<sup>7</sup>

---

5 Information for the Campaign for Clean and Safe Ports in Oakland case study is based on interviews conducted with Nikki Bas and Aditi Vaidya at EBASE and Doug Bloch at Change to Win.

6 Vaidya, Aditi. “Clean Air, Good Jobs: Green-Brown Alliance for Worker and Community Rights.” *Race, Poverty & the Environment: A Journal For Social and Environmental Justice*, Vol. 16, No. 1, Spring 2009. <http://www.urbanhabitat.org/rights/port>

7 EBASE’s survey of Port of Oakland drivers found that their median driver wage is \$10.69 an hour, well below the \$17 an hour necessary to cover basic monthly necessities in the Bay Area. Only 12% of port drivers make more than this survival wage. EBASE 2007.



In 2009, approximately 1,500 to 2,000 truck drivers operated out of the Port of Oakland. Most were of immigrants who contracted with more than 100 small trucking companies, who in turn contracted with retailers and shipping lines. “Drivers work an average of 11 hours a day, and many work 14 hours or more. Inefficiencies in the system make them spend an average of two-and-a-half hours waiting in line for each load they pick up. As they are waiting in line their trucks are idling, exposing themselves and residents to diesel fumes their trucks emit. Trucks regularly drive through and park in West Oakland, increasing air and noise pollution.”<sup>8</sup>

Port truck drivers are also exposed to serious health and safety risks on the job. Inside the cabs of trucks, workers inhale diesel fumes with carbon levels ten times higher than those in residential areas of Oakland. Long-term exposure to diesel exhaust is associated with a 40% increase in the risk of lung cancer.<sup>9</sup> Yet, because of their independent contractor status, Port truck drivers do not have access to workers compensation and other worker protections through Cal-OSHA.

Truck emissions also pose serious health risks to West Oakland and the surrounding community. Port trucks emit at least 125 pounds per day of diesel particulate matter into neighborhoods surrounding the Port.<sup>10</sup> As a result, diesel pollution is three times higher in West Oakland than the Bay Area average, increasing the risk for respiratory diseases and cancer.<sup>11</sup> The 2007 California Health Interview Survey found that 25% of children ages 5-17 in Alameda County had been diagnosed with asthma, a figure higher than the overall rate of 17% in California.<sup>12</sup> Exposure to air pollution increases the risk of lung cancer and exacerbates allergies and chronic bronchitis.

The trucks’ impact on the surrounding community extends beyond air pollution. Trucks on residential streets can cause safety hazards to pedestrians and bicyclists, reducing people’s sense of safety, which discourages walking and outdoor activity.

---

8 Vaidya, Aditi. “Clean Air, Good Jobs: Green-Brown Alliance for Worker and Community Rights.” *Race, Poverty & the Environment: A Journal For Social and Environmental Justice*, Vol. 16, No. 1, Spring 2009. <http://www.urbanhabitat.org/rights/port>

9 California Air Resources Board. “Findings of the Scientific Review Panel on The Report on Diesel Exhaust” as adopted at the panel’s April 22, 1998 meeting. <http://www.arb.ca.gov/toxics/dieseltac/combined.pdf>

10 EBASE. “Taking the Low Road: How Independent Contracting at the Port of Oakland Endangers Public Health, Truck Drivers, and Economic Growth,” 2007

11 EBASE and Pacific Institute. “Taking a Toll: The High Cost of Health, Environment, and Worker Impacts of the Oakland Port Trucking System,” February 2009.

12 UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. “California Health Interview Survey,” 2007

## 2. Organizing For Community Health and Worker Protections

In an effort to address the poverty, health, and environmental impacts associated with the current structure of the Port of Oakland, a coalition of more than 80 community and environmental organizations — led by the East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy (EBASE), the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the Alameda Labor Council — has formed to fight for cleaner air, sustainable jobs and greater accountability from the Port of Oakland. Community involvement around environmental justice issues was originally driven by several community-based organizations, including the West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project, before the Campaign for Clean and Safe Ports in Oakland began.

The Clean and Safe Ports Campaign proposes the following platform to address community health impacts and worker safety considerations:

- Require all port trucking firms to enter into concession agreements that incorporate environmental, community and labor standards;
- Grant “independent contractors” employee status, giving them the right to join a union and organize for better working conditions;
- Require trucking companies to operate only clean-emission trucks;
- Require trucking companies to provide off-street parking for trucks outside residential neighborhoods;
- Create a strong local-hire program for community residents most impacted by port pollution; and
- Support small, local businesses to meet these standards.<sup>13</sup>

Requiring concession agreements from all trucking companies hauling loads at the Port is crucial to ensuring that drivers are afforded basic protections, such as the option to organize and form a union to establish wage and benefit standards. In addition, the health and safety conditions for these employee-drivers would be regulated by Cal-OSHA, which would help prevent worker injury and exposure to illness.

In addition to basic wage and safety standards for workers, the environmental requirements attached to the trucking concession agreements would require all trucking companies doing business with the Port to maintain and operate clean and safe trucks. This requirement is expected to result in a significant reduction in emissions in West Oakland and along the Highway 880 corridor, areas that have been disproportionately

---

13 Coalition for Clean & Safe Ports Oakland. <http://www.oakland.cleanandsafeports.org/index.php?id=126>.

affected by Port pollution. A similar policy adopted in Los Angeles in 2008 resulted in a 70% decrease in emissions from the Port of Los Angeles, indicating the potential for quick and dramatic improvements in heavily impacted communities.<sup>14 15</sup>

### 3. A Winning Coalition Driving Federal Policy Change

The Oakland campaign is part of a national strategy that reaches from New York and New Jersey to Los Angeles and Seattle. Local victories have led to litigation over the preemptive reach of the Federal Aviation Administration Authorization Act (FAAAA), which regulates interstate trucking. After suffering a setback in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, which held that the FAAAA preempted ports from requiring concession agreements, the national Clean & Safe Ports Campaign has taken its fight to Congress to amend the statute to allow comprehensive regulatory schemes like the proposed Oakland Clean & Safe Ports Plan.<sup>16</sup>

#### C. Waste and Recycling Campaign in Los Angeles:<sup>17</sup> Greening the Dirtiest of Environmental Jobs

##### 1. The Reality Behind the Waste and Recycling Stream

The waste industry in the City of Los Angeles represents one of the clearest examples of the negative health impacts associated with unregulated low-wage industries. The City oversees the waste collection for both the residential market and the commercial market, including all retail and office buildings and multi-family residential (apartment) buildings. Though the services are essentially the same — waste collection — how the City delivers them to these two markets is markedly different.

The City of Los Angeles Bureau of Sanitation handles residential waste from single-family homes directly. These workers are public employees earning middle-income salaries (roughly \$20 per hour) with health benefits. The Bureau of Sanitation also provides job-training opportunities to minimize the risk of worksite injury and illness.

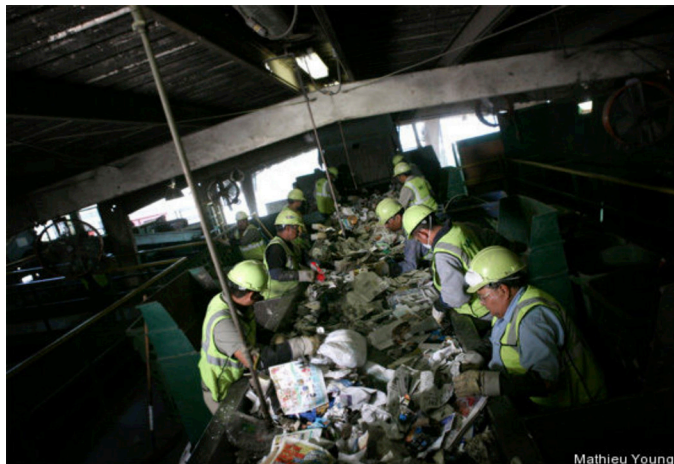
---

14 Greenhouse, Steven. "Clearing the Air at American Ports." *The New York Times*, February 26, 2010.

15 The Port of LA News, Press Release. "Port of Los Angeles Marks One-Year Anniversary, Successes of Clean Truck Program" [http://www.portoflosangeles.org/ctp/CTP\\_One\\_Year\\_Successes.pdf](http://www.portoflosangeles.org/ctp/CTP_One_Year_Successes.pdf)

16 Coalition for Clean & Safe Ports Oakland, Press Release. "Top American Port Official Presses Washington to Amend Outdated Law; Congressional Action Would Help Protect Comprehensive Local Initiatives that Improve Air Quality and Spur Green Job Growth." March 15, 2010. <http://www.oakland.cleanandsafeports.org/>

17 Information for the Waste and Recycling Campaign in Los Angeles is based on interviews conducted with Greg Good and Sabrina Bornstein at LAANE.



By comparison, the City's commercial, industrial and apartment building waste is handled by an open-market permit system where an unlimited number of businesses can secure waste collection permits for a small fee with limited review. At least 150 waste-hauling companies currently hold permits to collect commercial waste, producing significant operational inefficiencies.

The health impacts associated with the commercial waste and recycling market are startling. Commercial waste permits require no wage standard for workers, no environmental mandates for trucks, and virtually no safety requirements at the sorting facilities that receive the waste. A dizzying number of trucks collect waste from apartment buildings, commercial offices and industrial sites throughout the city without coordination. They haul waste to sorting locations called "materials recovery facilities" (MRFs), where garbage is dumped on conveyor belts to be sorted by workers who separate the recyclable material from other waste. The waste is then trucked to landfills while the recyclable material is sent to purchasers for export, further reprocessing or, in some instances, remanufacturing.

A lack of standards and minimal oversight have produced a market full of poverty, illness, and disease. Sorters of commercial waste are primarily Latinas earning poverty wages with no health benefits or worker protections, and toiling, on average, ten hours a day. They are routinely exposed to rotting meat, parasites, feces, asbestos, used syringes and medical waste, and are provided the most limited equipment (a single pair of earplugs and pair of gloves per week) to protect themselves from a hazardous work environment ripe with exposure to multiple dangers of disease. These workers have some of the most dangerous jobs in the country, with some estimates of 45-60 workers dying each year, a rate two to three times higher than police officers and fire fighters.<sup>18</sup>

Surrounding low-income communities also bear the burden of these environmental hazards. Many of the sorting and processing facilities are located in low-income neighborhoods. These facilities generate pollution from truck traffic and contribute to significant odor, dust, and noise problems, exposing nearby residents to multiple

---

18 Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries*. 2005 & 2008. [2008 data are preliminary.]

health concerns. As cities like Los Angeles pursue ever-higher goals for diversion of waste from landfills, additional MRFs will need to be sited and will likely be located in and adjacent to low-income communities of color. The reality of recycling is that it will require more MRFs and more workers spending their days sorting through our garbage.

## **2. Forging a Coalition Around Reforming the Waste Industry**

The Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE), labor leaders, environmental groups, waste industry workers, and community members, are set to launch a campaign to fundamentally reform how Los Angeles oversees its commercial waste market. The goal is to ensure job and environmental standards for workers and communities, and to establish accountability and evaluation mechanisms to monitor progress toward improvements in community health as it relates to this industry. The first major step will be securing support from the Los Angeles City Council to set desired standards as the baseline criteria that waste companies must meet to be eligible to bid for a permit.

## **3. Establishing New Health Standards for Workers**

A key element will be to require job standards for all sanitation workers, including drivers and waste sorters at facilities responsible for separating and processing municipal solid waste. Possible employment standards include: living wage and benefit standards that lift workers out of poverty and provide access to affordable, job-based health coverage; worker health and safety protections that minimize exposure to hazardous waste and risk of injury; and worker training programs to reduce health and safety problems and provide career advancement opportunities for employees.

Mandating new wage and worker protections will transform an industry currently riddled with dead-end jobs, no benefits and severe health risks for workers into an industry with a trained workforce earning livable wages and benefits that can contribute to the sustainability of the Los Angeles economy.

## **4. Raising Standards for the Environment and Community Health**

Wage and safety standards alone will not be enough to adequately reduce environmental impacts and improve overall community health. Toward these ends, the coalition aims to have the City identify and enforce heightened standards for waste truck emissions and waste and recycling facilities. On the facilities front, the goals include mitigating odor, dust, and pollution that typically accompany these structures, thereby improving surrounding neighborhoods.

Finally, as part of a reformed bid and permitting process, disposal companies could be required to pick up recycling as a basic performance criterion. Recycling is currently

most often handled separately — and voluntarily — in the Los Angeles commercial waste market. This shift would help Los Angeles achieve its goal of diverting 75% of its waste to recycling and composting sites by 2014 and up to 90% by 2025.

The coalition will kick off the waste campaign in summer 2010 with a goal of securing approval from the Los Angeles City Council in 2011 to reform the industry and institute a process for selecting commercial waste franchisees. A successful campaign model in the City of Los Angeles could be replicated in different geographic localities throughout California.



### III. Driving Systems Change Through the Green Jobs Movement

The three preceding case studies illustrate that community benefits are critical to building a bridge between green jobs and improved health outcomes. Behind each of these campaigns is the aim of making equity a central value in the transition to a green economy in order to ensure improved public health, environmental and economic outcomes. The key to accomplishing this aim is to effectuate systems change in the public sector.

The public sector is driving the greening of the economy through policy, regulations and investment.<sup>1</sup> By placing the most vulnerable populations at the center of the green agenda,<sup>2</sup> advocates and policy makers can create the space to scale-up and spread the most innovative practices in this arena. This requires a critical systems change in which the diverse and powerful roles played by government in the green economy (regulator, proprietor, convener, landlord/lessor, and investor) are leveraged to pursue the goals of lifting people out of poverty and rebuilding the middle class. It requires the creation, growth and maintenance of broad-based coalitions of health, social justice, labor, and environmental communities as the foundation of an effective and enduring movement. And it requires an alignment<sup>3</sup> of systems around alleviating poverty, improving the health of communities, and creating a middle class.

The case studies each depend on identifying handles to leverage government action to drive better economic development and health outcomes.

- Green Pays leverages government's role as an investor by effectively using federal grants to establish a high-road program aimed at opening up new

---

1 Akom, A.A. and Seth Miller. "Green Jobs and Public Health: A Preliminary Report" presented to the California Endowment, October 2009.

2 For example, measuring the success of regulations, policies and investments by the quality and quantity of middle-class career opportunities created and the level of improved health outcomes for these communities.

3 Achieving this alignment of systems is not without its challenges. To realize the opportunities for career advancement as jobs transform from low-paying jobs to Green Jobs, engaging workforce development programs is imperative. These programs are key to identifying barriers and challenges that low-income communities and communities of color may face, and to preparing them for the next generation of green jobs. Unfortunately, workforce development policies and economic development policies do not always inform one another. This lack of integration needs to be addressed to better realize the potential of green jobs, and programs need to be more demand driven and sector specific. Green For All's Communities of Practice program helps bridge this gap by bringing together practitioners in the field and putting forward best practices and innovative program models to influence public policy. See: Kleiman, Neil et al. "A Tale of Two Systems: Linking Economic Development and Workforce Development." Living Cities. May 2009; Green For All. "Green Pathways Out of Poverty: Workforce Development Initiatives." March 2009.

career pathways for low-income communities. It also plays on the County's role as convener to attract private capital to finance the up-front costs of retrofits so that the program can be scaled-up and that its benefits can be more broadly enjoyed.

- The Port of Oakland campaign leverages local government's proprietary role as operator of the Port. Successful coalition building at the local level is scaling up to leverage the federal regulatory role to mandate better health and worker safety outcomes for local communities and workers.
- The Los Angeles waste campaign will leverage local government's regulatory role as grantor of franchises for waste collection. It may also leverage the City's land-use authority over the siting of MRFs and transfer stations.

The shape and ambition of these campaigns are changing the trajectory of the green economy and defining success for the Green Jobs Movement. Each presents opportunities for replication across California and the entire country. Green For All's State and Local Initiatives Program is dedicated to accelerating the pace of that replication. Green For All facilitates and encourages adoption and scaling-up of the best model programs by building capacity among its network of partner organizations, and by building a broad-based movement to seed and nurture these campaigns throughout California and the rest of the country.



## IV. The Current Policy Environment and the Potential for Change

### A. Key Trends Influencing the Green Jobs Movement

The Green Jobs Movement is poised to redirect the transition to the green economy, putting it on a trajectory towards a more equitable future. But it must do so in a volatile policy environment that simultaneously presents both fertile ground for a systems change and the potential for a backlash against future job, health and environmental gains benefiting low-income communities and people of color.

The current recession — the worst in 70 years — has devastated city and state budgets. While a modest recovery appears to be unfolding, budget deficits continue to grow and high unemployment rates persists. As local and state governments slash services and furlough and layoff workers, some elected officials are tempted to reconsider their commitment to a progressive agenda. Mayors, city councilmembers and state legislators vie for the most business-friendly reputation. The notion that any job is a good job is regaining currency among economic development officials. In San Diego, three ballot propositions threaten to undo and prohibit living-wage requirements and community benefits agreements. At the state level in California, the “Dirty Energy Proposition” — sponsored by Texas oil companies — is trying to effectively repeal AB32 and could derail California’s leadership in the effort to effectively address climate change. If the voters approve it in November 2010, the Dirty Energy Proposition would signal a dramatic shift away from a green economy in California and have ripple effects throughout the nation.

Recent polling on the Dirty Energy Proposition also provides insight into the volatility of the electorate and highlights the need to focus attention on the shifting views of vulnerable populations. Early polling indicates that low- and moderate-income voters, Latinos and other communities of color that have traditionally been reliable environmental voters may be particularly vulnerable to misleading “jobs vs. the environment” messages. These populations may not oppose the rollback of pollution controls strongly enough to defeat the proposition. They may hold the key to victory in either direction; how they come down on the issue may depend on the crafting of distinct messages concerning the health impacts of the proposition. Messaging about the need to protect public health and fight pollution will be critical to mobilizing these voters to defeat this messaging of fear.

## B. The National, State and Local Policy Environment

Federal policy developments provide the most promising avenues to advance the Green Jobs Movement. Nearly two-thirds of federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds remain unspent, and funding awards for key programs have yet to be announced (e.g., \$454 million in competitive Energy Efficiency Community Block Grants). Unspent, these funds remain potential investments in the best green jobs efforts. Green For All has worked with six cities to include strong targeted-hiring elements in their EECBG applications to the federal government.

Most recently, Green For All led a successful effort to include quality-assurance and targeted-hire language in federal legislation that would create a \$6 billion Home Star Residential Retrofit Rebate Program. With these provisions, a well-designed implementation program can expand the number of low-income and minority individuals who will be hired to perform home energy-efficiency audits and deep retrofits. The program has the potential to create 138,000 jobs nationwide, as well as decrease energy bills and home health threats for low-income communities. The Home Star bill now moves from the House of Representatives Energy and Commerce Committee to the full floor of the House with this critical language included.

Reauthorization of the \$500 billion federal Transportation Act also presents a critical opportunity to steer federal monies towards the creation of healthier communities through increased investments in transit and incentives for smart-growth development. Green For All has joined efforts to support smart-growth provisions and is currently working with Transportation For America to ensure that the proposed legislation includes provisions to create greater access to public transportation for low-income communities, address health inequities and promote overall job growth.

Some state investments in energy efficiency and infrastructure also afford golden opportunities to advance broad health, environmental and green jobs gains. The \$3.1 billion energy-efficiency fund, administered by the California Public Utilities Commission and ratepayer funded, presents a significant opportunity to ensure broader benefits for low-income communities, including targeted hiring for jobs performing audit and retrofit work and targeted marketing to ensure that retrofits are performed on the apartments and homes of low-income residents.

Finally, state and federal investments in water infrastructure could also create thousands of green jobs over the next two decades as cities address crumbling sewer and storm drain systems, non-point source pollution, contaminated groundwater sources, and the need for more integrated water reuse and recycling approaches. The trend towards green infrastructure could also lead to the redesign of streets that include more bike lanes and trees and other plantings to capture storm water. In

addition, green infrastructure may promote more active and healthy environments as communities reclaim space from automobiles for open spaces that can act as detention basins and ponds for stormwater infiltration and double as recreational facilities during dry weather.

## V. Conclusion

The Green Jobs Movement can bridge the equity gap in health, environmental, and economic outcomes for low-income and minority communities in California. Ample policy levers exist at the federal, state and local level to build healthier, more economically viable communities. But this outcome is far from assured, and California is at a crossroads. The economic downturn has produced uncertainty, fear, and retrenchment that threaten the broad, progressive coalitions forged over the last two decades to advance public health, the environment, and economic equity — the very coalitions that are key to securing this healthier, more prosperous future for California. The Dirty Energy Proposition embodies the kind of divisive attack to which the state is vulnerable in this time of economic insecurity.

The Green Jobs Movement can advance the California Endowment's commitment to building healthy communities by creating pathways out of poverty, increasing work and safety standards, and improving the overall health of some of California's most vulnerable communities. As existing green jobs campaigns show, these health outcomes stem from successful efforts to link community engagement to policy levers capable of promoting real systems change. Replicating these existing campaigns and bringing these models to scale can transform degraded communities into vibrant healthy neighborhoods.