

**Report on the**  
**Good Jobs, Green Jobs National Conference:**  
**Making a Down Payment on the Green Economy**  
**Sponsored by the Blue-Green Alliance**  
**[www.greenjobsconference.org](http://www.greenjobsconference.org)**

**February 4-6, 2009/Washington D.C.**

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In Washington D.C. during the first week in February while the stimulus package was being negotiated in the halls of Congress, a significant slice of the electoral coalition that put Barack Obama in the White House met to talk about Green Collar Jobs. The conference, “Good Jobs, Green Jobs,” reflected a growing initiative to shape the green economy and define sustainability for the near, middle and far future. The Blue-Green Alliance – a group comprised of the United Steelworkers of America and the Sierra Club – sponsored the meeting with many additional partners.

It was reported that the registration was 2500 people before the opening day with many walk-ins anticipated. The group of attendees reflected a cross-section of diverse individuals from labor (blue collar), environmental advocacy groups (green), government entities and industry along with social activist organizations. The largest contributors included BP America and the Blue-Green Alliance. Many other large unions, industry leaders and advocacy groups including Green for All were additional significant contributors to the event.

The significance of the conference can be illustrated by the variety of elected and appointed officials along with industry and NGO leaders who spoke at the conference.

- Governors included Kathleen Sebelius (KS) and Martin O’Malley (MD).
- U.S. Senators included Sharrod Brown (OH), Debbie Stabenow (MI), and Amy Klobuchar (MN).
- Representatives from Congress included Keith Ellison (MN) and Henry Waxman (CA).
- Jared Bernstein, Chief Economic Policy Advisor to Vice-President Biden also presented along with the Executive Director of the UN Environment Program, and the newly appointed Administrator of the U.S. EPA, Lisa P. Jackson.
- Presidents of the United Steel Workers, the Communications Workers, the Teamster’s and the Laborer’s unions spoke at plenary sessions.
- NGO speakers included the Executive Director of the Natural Resources Defense Council, President of the Sierra Club, and Van Jones of Green for All.
- CEOs from the American Wind Energy Association and the Solar Energy Industries Association.

All of these speakers reflected a shared agreement that the new “green” economy was both economically viable and the proper policy for the times. There were also 47 workshops with a wide variety of topics covered. The general tenor of the event was enthusiastic, hopeful and positive. Participants were eager for information and suggestions about how to implement proposed strategies.

Wilbur Wright College was well represented by Jumaani Bates who spoke at a workshop on Prison Re-Entry and Green Jobs along with Brenda Palms-Barber from the North Lawndale Employment Network. Other speakers represented groups from across the nation. L.A. Technical-Trade College gave a strong presentation on curriculum development in green collar jobs training.

Since the stimulus package includes funds for residential retrofit dollars to be used in poor communities, there was much information regarding the various certifications available. The Building Performance Institute had a strong presence at the conference.

The strongest message projected at the conference was the essential need to build partnerships and cooperative agreements and the necessity for union membership as the method for making green jobs create middle class lifestyles with health insurance and decent wages.

If you had any doubts that the election of Barack Obama was the result of a movement among a wide coalition of many disparate groups, the “Good Jobs, Green Jobs” event should disprove your skepticism. And if you think these cooperative organizations are going to go back to business-as-usual and wait for the next election, you are likely to be wrong. The energy at the conference will show itself in different manifestations over time in communities, schools and workplaces. There is a commitment to what Will.i.am calls “a new day” that transcends traditional lines of communication and action. Only time will tell how effective this cooperative effort will be. However, if this conference is at all reflective there will be an increased voice among the labor, environmental, social action, business, education and government groups to work together to accomplish shared goals of sustainability.