

Latino Policy Priorities for Energy and Climate Change

As the fastest-growing segment of the workforce—and among the hardest hit by the recession—Latinos have much at stake in the design and implementation of new federal energy and climate change policies. The aspects of the debate that are especially vital for Latinos are costs and job opportunities. The following principles provide a framework for assessing the impact of proposed energy and climate change legislation on Latino workers and families.

- **Reduce and mitigate the impact of rising energy prices on low-income consumers.** New energy legislation may increase the price of energy in the short term. Estimates by the Congressional Budget Office warn that without targeted financial relief, higher costs would fall disproportionately on low- and moderate-income households—which includes seven million Latino households—who devote a larger portion of their income toward energy. Latino households could benefit from several scenarios designed to offset harmful energy price increases, including:
 - Refunds to residential utility consumers directly through their utility bills
 - Consumer refunds via the electronic benefits transfer system or other governmental systems such as Social Security or the tax system
- **Ensure that green jobs training opportunities reach disadvantaged workers.** Latinos are the fastest-growing segment of the workforce, and many are employed in occupations that are poised to grow with investments in clean energy. Appropriately designed and adequately funded workforce development programs are critical to ensuring that workers can access the training they need to remain competitive in their industries and advance in green careers. Promising strategies to ensure equity in the green labor market include:
 - Training vouchers and assistance for workers who are displaced by a changing energy landscape
 - Targeted funding for community-based job training programs that prepare hard-to-serve populations, including those with limited formal educational attainment and/or limited English proficiency, for careers in new and emerging green industries
- **Promote diversity in green business contracting.** Minority-owned firms are the fastest-growing businesses in the country, experiencing 46% growth between 2002 and 2007, compared to 18% growth for all American firms. Minority-owned firms also employ nearly six million people, providing a lifeline to workers who have been disproportionately impacted by the recession. Historically, however, contracts are not proportionately awarded without specified targets for minority procurement. To ensure that new business opportunities emerging from national energy priorities are equitably distributed, options include:
 - A 25% target for states to meet for minority subcontracting in order to receive funding for new energy projects
 - Financial assistance and scholarships for small contractors to become accredited in performing in-demand services to improve energy efficiency