



Recommendations to Include Latinos in Climate Change Legislation

Design a delivery mechanism for the Energy Refund Program that effectively reaches all low- and moderate-income households. Congress has indicated concerns about equity in climate change legislation. Indeed, the Congressional Budget Office's estimate of the House climate bill (H.R.2454) warns that without targeted financial relief to compensate for the economy-wide net costs of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, low- and moderate-income households—including nearly seven million Latino households—will bear a greater financial burden than higher-income households.

An ideal scenario to offset energy price increases among low-income Latinos would include delivering an Energy Refund via the electronic benefits transfer system and other governmental systems such as social security or Veterans benefits; and using a tax rebate on payroll or income taxes or a refundable credit such as the Child Tax Credit to deliver the refund. An energy bill refund to all residential utility consumers is another important part of the mix. Congress should oppose any refund mechanism—such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)—that may exclude citizen children with immigrant parents from participation. Participants in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) should have presumptive eligibility for the Energy Refund.

Encourage hiring of limited-English-proficient (LEP) workers for green construction jobs. S.1733 creates a Green Construction Careers Demonstration program to open employment opportunities to disadvantaged workers as the U.S. economy shifts toward cleaner sources of energy. While Latinos, especially foreign-born workers, are overrepresented in the construction industry, they dominate low-skill, low-wage occupations with little opportunity for upward mobility. Limited proficiency in English is a significant barrier to decent employment for more than 70% of foreign-born Latino adults. To ensure the new green economy does not widen the employment and wage disparities between Latinos and other workers, LEP individuals should be a targeted worker category under the Green Construction Careers Demonstration program (Section 303).

Invest in community-based organizations to prepare Latinos for careers in clean energy. Targeted investments in adult education and job training will ensure that Latinos, the fastest-growing segment of the workforce, are able to contribute to the fastest-growing occupations in the green economy. Community-based organizations have an excellent track record of reaching hard-to-serve populations—including Latinos with limited English proficiency and low educational attainment. One model that has demonstrated success with LEP individuals is “integrated” job training, which combines language and skills training. Congress should include community-based organizations as required partners in the delivery of pre-apprenticeship programs and other training programs in S.1733. Congress should also designate integrated training programs as qualified pre-apprenticeship programs under Section 303 of S.1733.

Ensure worker adjustment assistance reaches Latinos in carbon-intensive sectors. In high-polluting and carbon-intensive sectors, workers of all skill levels and backgrounds will be harmed by a carbon tax. Latinos are overrepresented in several manufacturing occupations that will likely contract if S.1733 is passed, including machine operators in coal and paper extraction and production, and freight and stock movers in metal and other production industries. Latinos also provide vital support and services that are dependent on these industries, such as maintenance, repair, and construction. Workers in industries identifiably vulnerable to injury due to climate change legislation should be presumptively eligible for worker adjustment benefits. This includes “secondary” workers, as defined in the 2002 reforms to the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act.