

Budzinski, SEEC Climate Jobs Task Force Push to Bolster and Diversify Energy Workforce

by Philip Shelly

February 6 2024 4:30 PM



WASHINGTON, D.C. — Today, Congresswoman Nikki Budzinski (IL-13) led six of her colleagues on the Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition (SEEC) Climate Jobs Task Force in a letter calling on the Department of Energy's (DOE) 21st Century Energy Workforce Advisory Board (EWAB) to develop a report including robust recommendations to strengthen and diversify the clean-energy workforce. Joining Congresswoman Budzinski in leading the letter were Representatives Jennifer McClellan (VA-04), Mark DeSaulnier (CA-10) and Suzanne Bonamici (OR-01).

“We hope to see the EWAB continue to address worker retraining and technical development in the clean energy sector, particularly in energy communities and communities impacted by industrial sector closures, relocations, and large scale layoffs,” wrote the Members. “Ensuring that the workforce has accessible training and development opportunities will help level the playing field for workers and continue to grow our capacity to build and maintain a robust domestic clean energy supply chain. Additionally, as investments from the Inflation Reduction Act continue to drive the transition to a clean energy economy, we urge the EWAB to support prevailing wage standards for all clean energy projects to provide opportunities for workers from all backgrounds to enter the clean energy workforce.”

The lawmakers outlined the following priorities:

- Prioritize workforce strategies that serve underrepresented groups: support apprenticeship and workforce development opportunities for underrepresented populations by increasing capacity building within Tribes, supporting early-career scientists and engineers at Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and equitably distributing workforce development benefits to disadvantaged communities.
- Address barriers to workforce participation: develop wraparound services to address child care, transportation and housing challenges that disproportionately prevent women and other historically underrepresented groups from participating in the clean-energy workforce.
- Bolster worker retraining and technical development in the clean-energy sector: prioritize energy communities and communities impacted by industrial sector closures, relocations and large-scale layoffs to ensure no community is left behind during the transition.
- Support prevailing wage standards: provide good-paying job opportunities for workers from all backgrounds to enter the clean-energy workforce.
- Coordinate with the Department of Labor (DOL) to strengthen skills training: facilitate inter-agency collaboration to identify gaps in training to ensure the energy sector has a skilled, robust workforce.

The letter was also signed by SEEC Climate Jobs Task Force Members Christopher Deluzio (PA-17), Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (VA-03) and Paul Tonko (NY-20).

The [SEEC Climate Jobs Task Force](#) advocates for pro-worker, pro-climate policies and seeks to promote collaboration between labor and environmental groups.

[The full text of the letter can be found here and below:](#)

Dear Secretary Granholm,

As members of the House Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition (SEEC) Climate Jobs Task Force, we thank you for your work to expedite the clean energy transition while creating good-paying jobs. We are encouraged to see the series of public meetings held by the 21st Century Energy Workforce Advisory Board (EWAB), which was established by Section 40211 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Public Law No: 117-58). As the EWAB continues to meet and develops a report with actionable recommendations, we write to uplift the following issues that impact our constituents.

In the EWAB's first meeting on September 18, 2023, the question was raised of how to prioritize workforce strategies that serve underrepresented groups. We applaud the discussion of the need for apprenticeship and workforce development opportunities for underrepresented populations, including efforts to incorporate traditional knowledge and increase capacity building within Tribes. Furthermore, we appreciate recognition of the importance of supporting early-career scientists and engineers and building capacity at Minority Serving Institutions. Historically, communities of color have been the last to benefit from federal investments and Black workers are vastly underrepresented in the clean energy workforce. In keeping with the Biden-Harris Administration's Justice40 goals, we encourage the EWAB to provide recommendations to ensure that training and workforce development benefits flow equitably to disadvantaged communities.

We consistently hear from families in our districts about problems accessing affordable child care, transportation, and housing and know that these challenges can be prohibitive to workforce participation, particularly when training or retraining is required. The lack of access to child care particularly affects women workers who already only make up 26 percent of the energy workforce. Thus, we were glad to see wraparound services included within the scope of the EWAB Subcommittee on Combating Barriers to Energy Employment. Moving forward, we urge the EWAB to develop robust recommendations on ways in which the Department of Energy and partner agencies can provide comprehensive support to enable workers from all backgrounds to participate in the clean energy economy.

Furthermore, we hope to see the EWAB continue to address worker retraining and technical development in the clean energy sector, particularly in energy communities and communities impacted by industrial sector closures, relocations, and large scale layoffs. Ensuring that the workforce has accessible training and development opportunities will help level the playing field for workers and continue to grow our capacity to build and maintain a robust domestic clean energy supply chain. Additionally, as investments from the Inflation Reduction Act continue to drive the transition to a clean energy economy, we urge the EWAB to support prevailing wage standards for all clean energy projects to provide opportunities for workers from all backgrounds to enter the clean energy workforce.

Lastly, we request that you not only consult with the Department of Labor (DOL), as is required under Section 40211 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, but work closely with DOL to identify the skills necessary for the energy sectors most in need of training. DOL is the principal U.S. agency charged with ensuring our economy has a skilled workforce and has decades of experience working with businesses, training providers, and local communities to carry out this mission. DOL led the Good Jobs Initiative and identified the key principles that make up high quality careers, such as family sustainable wages, worker empowerment, and access to benefits. DOL also oversees the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which is the backbone of our country's workforce system. Working with DOL will help to ensure that the 21st century energy workforce will not only sustain a clean energy economy, but a robust middle class.

Thank you for your dedication to these issues. We look forward to continuing to partner with you to support job creation during the clean energy transition.