



## **CLIMATE PROTECTION: EQUITY AND OPPORTUNITY TALKING POINTS**

The cost and effects of global warming and greenhouse gas emissions are real. As public demand to cut America's global warming pollution grows, the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress is introducing legislation designed to address climate change at a faster pace than any previous Congress. Chief among this legislation is the Lieberman-Warner Climate Security Act (S. 2191).

The Climate Security Act will soon be up for debate on the floor in the U.S. Senate. As big business, special interests, organizations, and politicians weigh in on the cost of acting, the cost of inaction is steeper.

The debate will be an important and precedent-setting opportunity – if we seize it – to frame climate protection policy as *economic* policy that can create millions of good green-collar jobs and build an inclusive green economy strong enough to lift people out of poverty, while staving off the worst effects of global warming. If we do not take the opportunity to frame this debate, it will be framed for us, most maliciously by opponents who will play on economic fears and trumpet false concerns for the poor and people of color in an effort to justify the pollution-based status quo.

The talking points below are not intended to address the strengths and weaknesses of S. 2191. They are to help articulate simple but compelling messages in the media and among the public regarding a vision for climate protection policy that helps build an inclusive green economy.

### **WE NEED FEDERAL CLIMATE LEGISLATION THAT:**

#### **Maximizes the gain for low-income communities and communities of color**

Global warming legislation should build an inclusive green economy that provides pathways out of poverty and expands opportunity for all American workers and communities, particularly those who have been shut out of the current pollution-based economy.

Climate protection legislation must create and expand entrepreneurial, wealth-building, and job creation opportunities while funding training and job-readiness programs that assist workers and provide access to work for those who need it most.

A shift to a low-carbon, clean, green economy should focus on improving the health and well-being of low and moderate income



people, who suffer disproportionately from cancer, asthma and other respiratory ailments in our current pollution-based economy.

### **Minimizes the pain for the most vulnerable**

Energy prices are already rising dramatically as the world's supply of fossil fuels fails to keep pace with increasing demand. These prices, and prices for a range of energy-intensive commodities, products and services, are likely to increase further in the near-term when global warming legislation ensures that polluters pay a price for greenhouse gas emissions.

Because low and moderate-income households spend a larger share of their budgets on energy and other basic costs of living than better-off households, global warming legislation should ensure that any energy price increases are offset for these households and workers, with assistance delivered in ways that also enhance energy conservation goals.

Over the long term, this should include not only economic assistance to offset impacts from energy rate increases, but direct energy-efficiency investments to drive down energy bills overall.

### **Invests in green-collar jobs**

Global warming legislation has the potential to build on green-collar job initiatives that have started across America by ensuring that sufficient investments are made to bring existing efforts to scale and to kick start new efforts in every community.

Global warming legislation should make investments that create and prepare people for green-collar jobs, which are well-paid, career-track jobs that contribute directly to preserving or enhancing environmental quality.

Green-collar jobs are real and are already being created across America as communities recognize that these jobs can fight poverty, pollution, and global warming at the same time. Most of these jobs are existing occupations that are being up-skilled and repurposed toward the end of building a green economy.

For the most part, green-collar jobs are community-based. Because they focus on transforming the immediate natural and built environment, they are harder, and in some cases impossible, to move



offshore. No one will ship a building from Chicago to be retrofitted in China.

## **Limits carbon emissions at a level that science not big business dictates**

To avoid the worst effects of climate change, we must cut our greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2050.

Unchecked, the impacts of global warming will be costly for everyone. But the effects of global warming and negligent climate protection policy will hit poor people first and worst. Hurricane Katrina was the wake-up call.

Poor people – who are disproportionately people of color – will also be the most severely affected by the economic downturns and dislocations that go with ecological catastrophes. They are least able to find new jobs, new homes and new hope.

Policies designed to limit greenhouse gas emissions and advance climate solutions must be aggressive enough to ensure that the worst environmental and economic consequences of global warming are averted.

## **Makes polluters pay**

Polluters should not be rewarded for polluting. They should not be handed free permits and windfall profits.

The largest possible share of money generated by placing a cost on carbon should be used for making the investments necessary for an inclusive and fair transition to a green economy, which advances the needs of workers, communities and high-road green businesses while also saving the planet.