

Labor

Generational Goal. Establish clean technologies and sustainable green jobs that provide safe work, a healthy environment and economic development for all as a centerpiece of the nation's economic strategy.

Objective 1. To seek the adoption of international trade agreements which protect, promote, and instill a respect for the environment, workers and communities.

Priority Action Items

1. Build the strongest environmental labor and workplace standards into any trade agreements. The most health protective/ ILO/ international environmental /consumer standards should set the minimum standard for any trade agreement.
2. Develop and foster relationships with NGOs and labor groups on every continent
 - a. To share resources and strategies
 - b. To build political power

Objective 2. To increase labor's participation in shaping a healthy economy based on decent, well-paying, safe and sustainable jobs that protect public and environmental health.

Priority Action Items

1. Institute policies, such as the Employee Free Choice Act, to support an increase in union density, acknowledging that unions provide a voice for workers and help develop and enforce genuinely health-protective occupational health and safety and environmental laws.
2. Protect workers and affected communities displaced due to environmental or health policies through a just transition program.
3. Government should develop processes so that workers have a say in technology choices that can affect health and environment because they possess invaluable and unique knowledge, resources, experience to enable better choices.
4. Continue to build blue/green coalitions: labor, health advocates, environmental justice advocates, environmentalists, and occupational health and safety groups such as state and national Councils on Occupational Health (COSH) to gain political power to win our mutual and collective goals.
 - Examples: The SAFER Coalition, CHANGE, Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow, Blue Green Alliance see www.bluegreenalliance.org.
 - Example: Safe Way Back Home project, a partnership between Steelworkers and Deep South Center for Environmental Justice to clean up and rebuild New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.
5. Increase public understanding of the importance of the labor movement to all working people and their families in setting livable wages and providing benefits, and combating the vulnerability of all employees facing increasing power of capital interests.
6. Invest pension funds in green, socially responsible companies that promote sustainability. Funds that do not support these ideas should be divested.

Objective 3. Reform chemicals policy in the US and globally to support the adoption of benign substances and products.

Priority Action Items:

1. Expand and strengthen, (a) OSHA PELs, (b) chemical release data systems, and (c) right to know programs while promoting and developing green jobs for all to ensure genuinely safe jobs and healthy families.
2. Effect these substantive improvements in protection in #1 in tandem with reforming the current dysfunctional process of developing and enforcing standards
3. Increase understanding among stakeholders that labor goals are not at odds with environmental goals.
4. Institute new and enforce all existing labor and environmental laws, thereby removing the advantage of companies to operate where regulations are non-existent, ineffective, weak and/or not enforced.
5. Develop a new integrated chemicals policy for the United States to substitute existing ones which will ensure good data on all chemicals in commerce, rapid decision-making, and processes to incentivize substitution of safer alternatives.
6. Government policies should link environmental impacts, the cost of everyday items, and the incidence of disease to substandard conditions experienced in the workplace.
7. Support development and manufacture of safer chemicals and products; green chemistry and green technologies.
 - Example: The New Jersey Work Environment Council and more than 130 other labor organizations advocated for and won the implementation of inherently safer technologies for New Jersey chemical plants, see <http://www.njwec.org/images/pdf/CS%20Press%20Release%20March%2016%202007.pdf>
8. Institute green and ecological taxes and other programs to include the human and environmental costs of consumer products and clearly identify the social and environmental benefits these taxes and programs will provide.

Objective 4. See federal, state, county, and municipal governments, as employers of the majority of the organized American workforce, lead the private sector by example.

Priority Action Items:

1. Retrofit existing public buildings to utilize green and healthy design, construction, and maintenance saving technologies necessary for these structures to be energy efficient and promote safe and healthy work environments.
 - This includes exploring options for the installation of solar panels, wind turbines, and/or other green energy sources.
2. All new publicly funded buildings should be of green design and constructed of environmentally compatible materials with a life-cycle analysis of the building.
 - The design should go beyond energy efficiency and incorporate anticipated future energy and climate issues
3. Institute procurement policies which set preferential guidelines for recycled, recyclable, non-ecologically destructive and non-toxic US made supplies and products, including healthy local/regional food.

Objective 5. By 2030 all chemical legacy communities-- those impacted by residual chemical and industrial waste-- will be remediated and protected from future contamination in the spirit of environmental justice.

Priority Action Items:

1. Create decent, well paying, safe, and healthy sustainable jobs that promote healthy families.
2. The federal government should seek to achieve economic justice, job security, and full employment for working people
3. Restore contaminated and/or otherwise damaged areas to a healthy state with stringent cleanup levels for air, soil and water.
4. Ensure that the cleanup does not lead to disenfranchisement of community residents. They must be meaningfully involved in every step of the process.
 - Full disclosure of information,
 - Opportunities for input/involvement in investigation and cleanup decisions
 - Employment opportunities for cleanup
5. Prevent the creation of new brownfields by retrofitting existing and equipping new manufacturing lines with a closed loop system of production. Systems that do not lend themselves to closed loop production should be permitted only upon approval of facility workers and residents of the community in which the facility is sited.
6. Address Income disparities that result in intractable adverse public health ramifications