



## **AMERICAN ENERGY WORKER OPPORTUNITY ACT**

**Co-Sponsors:** Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Senator Bob Casey (D-PA), Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO), Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Senator Tina Smith (D-MN), Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA)

**Endorsed by:** United Steelworkers (USW), United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), Utility Workers Union of America (UWUA), AFL-CIO, BlueGreen Alliance, National Wildlife Federation, League of Conservation Voters (LCV), Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), and the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS)

### **BACKGROUND**

For generations, the United States' economy ran on coal. Mineworkers would make their way through darkness, miles underground, facing hazardous working conditions, and sacrificing their own health over the course of their lives to bring electricity into homes, factories, and hospitals. In fact, a single coal-fired plant can generate enough electricity to power up to 2 million homes per year. In short, the United States owes its economic growth and dominance to the generations of men and women who worked in our nation's coalfields.

For the past several decades, through a combination of market forces in natural gas production, competition from foreign countries, cleaner power sources, increased mechanization, and two economic crises in the span of a decade, coal employment is at its lowest point in our nation's history. Now, as we enter a new phase of 21<sup>st</sup> century energy production in the United States – Congress must commit to a worker-centered approach that enables workers, families, and communities to make a true transition to a brighter future.

With President Biden's job-creating Build Back Better plan focused on aggressive investments in renewable sources, including windmills, solar panels, and geothermal energy, we have the chance to support the workers who helped build our nation transition to the jobs of the future.

### **PROPOSAL**

We propose a worker-driven transition plan for fossil-fuel workers. Congress would provide billions in investment over a span of 10 years to assist workers who are laid off as the nation shifts to cleaner, renewable energy sources. This temporary energy worker transition program would provide a wage supplement, health care benefits, education and training funds, as well as an additional education benefit for children. The proposal would also prioritize employers who plan to hire eligible workers for the clean energy grants created under the Build Back Better plan.



- **Eligible workers:** workers whose employment is terminated from a coal mine, coal-fired power plant, coal transport, or oil refinery, provided that the worker was employed continuously and full time for at least 12 months prior to layoff, with authority for the Secretary to add additional groups of fossil fuel-dependent workforces as employment impacts make it necessary.
- **Wage supplement:** workers will receive wage replacements or supplements in addition to assistance to maintain health benefits and contribute to retirement.
- **Worker education and training:** workers will be eligible for grants for allowable education and training up to and including a four-year degree.
- **Education for the children of dislocated workers:** direct educational grants for the children of dislocated workers deemed eligible by the program for allowable education and training up to and including a four-year degree.