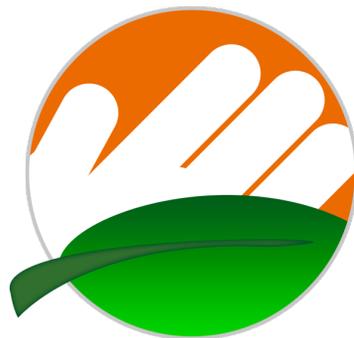


CLIMATE JOBS FOR ALL: BUILDING BLOCK FOR THE GREEN NEW DEAL

DECEMBER 2018



LABOR NETWORK
FOR SUSTAINABILITY

LNS DISCUSSION PAPER



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1. INTRODUCTION

During the summer of 2018 a group of climate, youth, progressive, and labor organizations decided to link the growing interest in a federal jobs guarantee to climate protection by a plan to put people to work building a fossil free economy. This Labor Network for Sustainability discussion paper aims to provide background on proposals for such a “climate jobs guarantee” and the questions they raise.

The federal jobs guarantee (JG) is a concept also known as “jobs for all” and the federal government as “employer of last resort.” It envisions a federal program somewhat like the New Deal’s Works Progress Administration (WPA) that would provide funds for non-profit organizations, local governments, and other agencies serving the public to employ anyone who wants a job at a wage roughly comparable to the demands of the Fight for \$15 campaign. According to columnist Jonathan Chait, the jobs guarantee plan “has materialized almost out of nowhere and ascended nearly to the status of Democratic Party doctrine.”¹ Related proposals are being made under such rubrics as “a green new deal” and “green jobs for all.”

The current advocates of JG generally include climate protection as one of many types of work beneficial to the public that might be included in a jobs guarantee program. However, they generally have not proposed how such a program might specifically address the climate emergency. We will refer to a jobs guarantee focused on climate protection as a Climate Jobs Guarantee (CJG).

The idea of a jobs guarantee, and the idea of combining it with a climate program, raise many questions which will be laid out and addressed at least in part in this paper. They include:

How would a CJG actually work?

Who would be eligible for the jobs?

What would the jobs pay?

What would be the role of unions?

What is the interest of unions in a CJG?

How does the JG relate to the goals and concerns of the climate movement?

What kind of jobs offered under the CJG contribute to climate protection?

¹ Jonathan Chait, “Democrats Are Rushing Into a Job Guarantee. It Could Be a Huge Mistake,” *National Interest*, April 25, 2018.

What would be the impact of the CJG on poverty?

What would be the impact of the CJG on inequality?

The mission of the Labor Network for Sustainability (LNS) is to engage workers and communities in building a transition to a society that is ecologically sustainable and economically just. LNS has long advocated “jobs for all” as a part of a just transition to a climate-safe economy.² The CJG could be a vehicle to help achieve that goal. But both its benefits and its potential downsides need to be carefully evaluated. The purpose of this paper is to stimulate discussion of the CJG among labor, environmental, progressive, policy, and justice constituencies. The final section of this paper lays out questions potential advocates should consider before making a full-scale commitment to the CJG proposal. This discussion paper was prepared for LNS by Jeremy Brecher.

2. THE VISION: A JOBS GUARANTEE TO PUT AMERICA TO WORK HALTING CLIMATE CHANGE

In May 2018, Varshini Prakash and Sarah Meyerhoff, two leaders of the youth climate movement Sunrise, wrote an article titled “It’s Time for the Climate Movement to Embrace a Federal Jobs Guarantee.”³ They called for a policy through which “the government directly employs anyone who wants a job but doesn’t have one.” They argued that a jobs guarantee program with a strong focus on stopping and preparing for climate change might “quickly marshal public support and resources behind climate action.”

Sunrise is a youth climate movement that aims to “stop climate change and create millions of good jobs in the process.”⁴ It has been taking the lead on efforts to combine climate protection with a federal jobs guarantee. Other groups like the Sierra Club, Demos, 350.org, the Center for Popular Democracy, the Labor Network for Sustainability, and the US Climate Action Network have also been discussing the CJG.

Prakash and Meyerhoff note that “many jobs guarantee proponents mention tackling climate change as one of many social goods that such a program could produce,” but they have yet to fully map out what they understand

² See for example, Jeremy Brecher, *Climate Solidarity: Workers vs. Warming* <http://www.labor4sustainability.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Climate-Solidarity.pdf>, and Jeremy Brecher, Ron Blackwell, and Joe Uehlein, “If Not Now, When? A Labor Movement Plan to Address Climate Change” http://www.labor4sustainability.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/NLF541793_REV1.pdf

³ They are described as “youth leaders in the climate justice movement.” http://inthesetimes.com/working/entry/21164/climate_movement_federal_jobs_guarantee_bernie_sanders_2018

⁴ <https://www.sunrisemovement.org>



“tackling climate change” to mean. JG proposals can be strengthened by a “climate justice lens.” That should go beyond “green infrastructure projects” to include such adaptation measures as “access to affordable, healthy food, care for the elderly and other vulnerable populations, and stronger school systems to enable younger generations to transition from climate-vulnerable livelihoods.” They urge the climate movement to play an active role in the development of JG proposals to ensure that climate change is “meaningfully embedded” in them.

The climate jobs guarantee may be a popular political issue. Polling firm Civis Analytics says a jobs guarantee is one of the most popular issues they’ve ever polled: 52% in support and 29% opposed.⁵ Polling by Sunrise indicates that support for a jobs guarantee focused on climate protection is even more popular. Prakash and Meyerhoff say a climate jobs guarantee could be the climate movement’s “Medicare-for-All” policy – “a universal program big enough to address the massive and complicated crisis of climate change, but still tangible and popular among the vast majority of Americans.”

The climate jobs guarantee has been finding growing support. Sen. Bernie Sanders is developing a jobs guarantee proposal; many Democratic candidates and presidential hopefuls have supported the idea. It was projected into the 2018 campaign and is likely to play an even greater role in 2020. Evan Weber of Sunrise says the group’s top goal for the next two years is to “Push JG to the top of the political agenda.”

Sunrise’s “Climate Jobs Guarantee Policy Primer” concludes that by “making a Jobs Guarantee a headline demand for the climate movement” we can “end the ‘jobs vs. environment’ fallacy forever”; rally “unprecedented public support behind climate action”; and “ensure that JG proposals include jobs for a just and rapid transition to a zero-carbon, climate-resilient economy.”⁶

3. THE JOBS GUARANTEE PLAN

The discussion of a jobs guarantee has been largely based on an April, 2019 working paper by Pavlina R. Tcherneva of the Levy Economics Institute of Bard College called “The Job Guarantee: Design, Jobs, and Implementation”⁷ and the report “The Federal Job Guarantee – A Policy to Achieve Permanent Full Employment” by Mark Paul, William Darity, Jr., and Darrick Hamilton commissioned by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.⁸ Unless otherwise noted the description of the JG here is based on the Tcherneva

⁵ <https://www.thenation.com/article/why-democrats-should-embrace-a-federal-jobs-guarantee/>

⁶ “Sunrise Jobs Guarantee Policy Primer,” Sunrise Movement, April 2018.

⁷ <https://docs.google.com/document/d/11NIA3s87CiQuqpbzt3sJXkw3d10YKF0m9rjrrqpYAYA/edit>

⁸ Pavlina R. Tcherneva, “The Jobs Guarantee: Design, Jobs, and Implementation” Levy Economics Institute, April, 2017. http://www.levyinstitute.org/pubs/wp_902.pdf

⁸ Mark Paul, William Darity, Jr., and Darrick Hamilton, “The Federal Job Guarantee – A Policy to Achieve Permanent Full Employment” commissioned by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/full-employment/the-federal-job-guarantee-a-policy-to-achieve-permanent-full-employment>



working paper.

The historical program that most resembles the JG was the New Deal's Works Progress Administration (WPA). We will note both similarities and differences between the JG and the WPA throughout this paper.

A federal jobs guarantee will provide jobs for all who want them in their own communities performing socially useful work. It will be established by federal legislation, funded by the federal government, and run under the jurisdiction of the Department of Labor. It will be primarily administered by local and municipal governments, nonprofits, social enterprises, and cooperatives. In contrast to the WPA, this is a permanent program, though its size can be expected to vary depending on economic conditions and social needs.

The JG will not exclude any individual or group of people who want to work. It will make whatever special provisions are necessary to employ veterans, at-risk youth, ex-convicts, people with disabilities, and other people with special needs and/or barriers to employment. Like the WPA, it will fit jobs to people, providing employment that is appropriate to their education, skill, and experience. It will provide part-time and flexible work arrangements for those who need them.

The jobs provided by this program will provide an estimated \$15 per hour plus benefits, including health insurance. "Because it guarantees that every person who wishes to work can find a public-option job with a living wage-benefit package," the JG "establishes the labor standard that must be met by all employers in the private, public, or nonprofit sectors," ensuring that "no working person would live in poverty." It will provide education, training, and apprenticeship opportunities.

The JG will establish "community jobs banks" which find and list available and potential jobs in the communities where they are needed. It will create the greatest number of jobs in communities with the greatest number of people needing work, and will target those groups that have been deprived of fair access to good jobs. The JG will assess community needs and resources to "match unfilled community needs with unemployed or underemployed people who could work to meet them." It will include programs to protect and improve the environment.

The JG is a new program that does not replace existing programs. People will have a choice between receiving unemployment insurance, welfare benefits, or working under the JG program. JG is an employment program, not a workfare program that requires people to work in order to receive other benefits to which they are entitled like Medicare, SNAP, or Head Start. It does not displace existing public or private sector work.

The estimated direct cost of providing jobs for all is 1.3 percent to 2.4 percent



of GDP. This is about half of what we now spend on Social Security and half of what we spend on Medicare and Medicaid.⁹ The JG will greatly reduce unemployment, welfare, and other benefit programs, so its net cost would be somewhere between 0.8 percent and 2 percent of GDP. That's not counting additional savings from reduced unemployment, substance abuse, health-related costs for uninsured individuals, and suicide.

Tcherneva points out that this program is an investment in the public good. It "separates the offer of employment" from "the profitability of employment." Projects are "created to serve community needs," rather than "prioritizing whether the projects are deemed 'profitable' in the narrow sense."

4. WHY A CLIMATE JOBS GUARANTEE?

A climate jobs guarantee will accomplish four principal objectives.

1. Justice

The JG provides a powerful weapon against poverty, inequality, and injustice. It will eliminate poverty among nearly all who want to work by providing a living wage and benefits to everyone who will take a job. Because the program is open to all, it ensures that those who have been most excluded from remunerative employment for whatever reason are guaranteed a job with benefits at an above-poverty level. It therefore has the greatest beneficial impact on the most marginalized and discriminated-against people. By lifting up those who have been at the bottom economically it directly reduces inequality. The program is designed to further realize these objectives through recruitment, training, and job design focused on those who have been excluded from good jobs.

The JG, unlike many social policies that aim to "raise the bottom," will directly benefit the millions of people who are currently outside the workforce. These people do not show up in unemployment statistics; they only show up in the shrinking proportion of Americans who are in the labor force. These people have little reason to hope they can make a living through a job. The jobs guarantee will provide them both the opportunity and the incentive to join the workforce.

The JG will also provide jobs with benefits for the millions who are unemployed or involuntarily working only part time. This will benefit not only those who have been laid off from steady jobs, but the larger number of workers for whom intermittent involuntary unemployment is the norm.

The JG will drive up the wage floor in the rest of the economy since workers who are paid less than \$15 an hour plus benefits can shift to the JG program.

⁹ Tcherneva, p. 27.



That enormously increases their bargaining power and means that employers must pay a comparable wage-benefit package to retain their workforce. The JG is therefore an effective means to achieve the objectives of the Fight for 15.

The JG will help increase all workers' power by strengthening their ability to organize and bargain collectively. It should be designed to create a sector of the economy that guarantees worker protections and standards, including workers' right to organize, bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, engage in concerted action, and retain their Constitutional rights on the job. It will eliminate the proverbial "long line of job seekers outside the employer's door" that undermines the power of workers to effectively bargain with employers.

2. Climate protection and other public purposes

The climate jobs guarantee, by drawing millions of people into the workforce, will provide the labor power needed for an emergency mobilization to transition to a fossil free, climate safe economy, as well as to meet a wide range of other public purposes. In this it resembles the homefront mobilization in World War II through which the war effort was able to meet its need for millions of workers. Without such an increase in the available workforce, the creation of millions of climate jobs will be stymied through labor shortage leading to uncontrolled inflation. The CJG will provide work experience and training that will allow its participants to move into higher skilled, higher wage jobs in the private and public sectors.

In addition to climate protection, workers in the JG program will also be able to provide for a wide range of needs that can help reduce injustice and create a better way of life for all. These range from education to housing to environmental protection and improvement. The WPA produced schools, parks, post offices, and other amenities that we still celebrate today; The JG can do the same.

3. Countering economic cycles

For many advocates of a jobs guarantee, a primary purpose is to counter the economic cycles of boom and bust. In times of recession, the millions of people thrown out of work not only constitute a fiesta of injustice and human misery; their loss of income leads to a decrease in effective demand (aka purchasing power) that aggravates the downward spiral of the economy. The JG automatically counteracts this tendency by employing a high proportion of those who have lost their jobs, thus maintaining their incomes and the economy's effective demand. When the economy expands, many workers will choose to leave the JG for better jobs, providing an expanded workforce for the private and public sectors. JG workers who are needed for climate protection and other essential activities can then transfer to other sectors.



4. Economic democratization

The JG provides a way to challenge our society's growing democracy deficits. According to Tcherneva, it can encourage "citizen engagement, public decision-making, and local institution building," for example through local participatory budgeting and community input about local projects.¹⁰

Because the program aspires for citizen input, because it drastically reduces the threat of unemployment, because it puts pressure on punitive labor practices in the private sector, because it establishes a labor standard for pay and working conditions, and because it focuses exclusively on investing in the public good, it can be an institution with profound democratizing tendencies, and a conduit for transformative change in the workplace, people's everyday lives, and the economy as a whole.

The JG also provides opportunities for workers and communities to experiment with alternative, more democratic forms of enterprise, such as coops and public utilities. The JG should encourage such experiments and ensure a level playing field for them.

5. THE JOBS GUARANTEE AND THE FAILURES OF THE LABOR MARKET

People who are unemployed, underemployed, and outside the workforce, combined with low-wage workers making less than \$16 per hour, add up to about half the potential working population. Putting them to work building a fossil free economy can not only combat climate change but also sharply reduce poverty and unemployment.

The labor reserve

Government statistics portray the official unemployment rate as the lowest in half a century. However, in August 2018 there were:

- 6.2 million people officially unemployed;
- 4.4 million people working part-time but wanting full-time work;
- 5.4 million people who want to work but were not counted in the official statistics.

That is, there were at least 16 million people – 9.4% of the labor force -- who wanted but were unable to find stable, reasonably-paid work.¹¹

¹⁰ Tcherneva, p. 16.

¹¹ National Jobs for All Coalition, "Unemployment Data, August, 2018."
<https://njfac.org/index.php/2018/09/07/unemployment-data-august-2018/>



There are also millions of people who have dropped out of the labor force or who have never joined it. The size of this group is indicated by the long-term decline in the percentage of the population in the labor force. The causes of this exodus – or exclusion -- from the world of work are debated. But whatever the causes, the result is that tens of millions of people have adapted to a life without work. This means that any effort to draw them back into the labor force will have to provide a secure way of life more attractive than the one they have adapted to.

Climate mobilization requires drawing such potential workers into the workforce both to do the work of protecting the climate and to prevent labor shortages that will lead to inflation. The CJG provides a way to do this that will accomplish what war-time jobs, education, training, and special recruitment of women and other groups did during the World War II homefront mobilization.

The low wage labor market

As inequality has grown throughout American society it has also grown within the working class. Labor market segmentation is now extreme. According to the GAO, “about 40% of the U.S. workforce ages 25-64 earned hourly wages of \$16 or less” from 1995 to 2016.¹²

There is a sharp divide between this 40% of the workforce who make less than \$16 per hour and the better paid sectors. Nine years after the Great Recession began, the largest and fastest-growing sector of the economy is in low- paid, "service class" jobs. These workers are largely trapped within this sector -- there is little mobility from lower to higher wage employment. A study of the 65 million workers in low-wage service jobs found that, over the course of one year, only 5 percent moved to a higher-paying job. 10% left the workforce and nearly 7 percent became unemployed.¹³ As the official unemployment rate has fallen the wages of these low-wage jobs have barely risen.

Like the unemployed and underemployed, these workers would also benefit from a job that paid \$15 per hour plus benefits.

¹² “Low-Wage Workers: Poverty and Use of Selected Federal Social Safety Net Programs Persist among Working Families”

GAO-17-677: Published: Sep 22, 2017. Publicly Released: Oct 23, 2017.

¹³ Irina Ivanova, “For millions, low-wage work really is a dead end.” *CBS News* April 20, 2018.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/low-wage-work-really-is-a-dead-end-for-millions/>



The gyrating labor market

Booms, busts, and a labor reserve of the unemployed have been features of capitalism from its inception. For a few decades after World War II, US macroeconomic policies and domination of global markets kept these downsides at bay. But since the recession of 1973, and even more since the Great Recession of 2007, the downward spirals and declining percentage of the population in the workforce have grown more extreme. Even in May 2018, with the lowest official unemployment in 18 years, the proportion of the population outside the workforce or receiving wages under \$16 per hour has barely budged. As for so long, African Americans and other groups subject to discrimination are about twice as likely as average to be unemployed, underemployed, or outside the workforce. There is also great current concern that a new wave of technological change, such as 3-D print manufacturing and self-driving vehicles, may lead to mass layoffs and additional unemployment.

The gyrations of demand for labor take a terrible toll on working people, leading to sudden drops into poverty and deprivation and stress about where the next job – or even the next meal – is coming from. They also have had a destructive effect on climate protection efforts, which have often been initiated during good times only to be slashed in times of economic contraction. Climate protection requires orderly, sustained development. A CJG will help stabilize effective demand and thereby the entire economy.

6. THE CJG AND CLIMATE PROTECTION STRATEGIES

There are many different proposals for the transition to a climate safe economy. All are based on increasing fossil-free energy and increasing the efficiency with which it is used, but each involves a different mix and sequencing of those changes and a different mix of policies to realize them. Each therefore has different implications for the types and numbers of jobs required.

Here we will just list some of the principal approaches to give a sense of the range of climate policies that might be combined with a climate jobs guarantee. Their detailed job implications and how they would fit into a climate jobs guarantee will require further research.

Price on carbon: Much mainstream climate policy is based on putting a tax on GHG emissions or requiring emitters to purchase permits to emit (“cap-and-trade”). The underlying assumption is that this will raise the relative cost of fossil fuel energy, leading economic actors to shift to fossil-free energy and/or reduce their energy consumption through energy efficiency. It is



difficult to see how to link a climate job guarantee to such a program, except that receipts from taxes or permits might be used to help fund a CJG.

Clean Energy Future: A study prepared by LNS and 350.org with research by Frank Ackerman and associates of Synapse Energy Economics presents a plan for 80% GHG reduction by 2050. It adds half-a-million jobs over business-as-usual, primarily in manufacturing and construction. The plan actually saves money over time.¹⁴

Green Growth: This study by Robert Pollin and associates at PERI-CAP presents an investment model based on what investments are necessary to lower carbon emissions.¹⁵ The PERI-CAP plan proposes a pathway to reducing U.S. greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 40 percent over twenty years—by 2030–35. It projects that the plan will create 4.2 million new jobs, including direct, indirect, and induced jobs. Jobs will increase at all levels of credentials and pay. A substantial number of the jobs created will be agriculture jobs related to the production of a new generation of biofuels.

Solutions project: Mark Jacobson has pioneered proposals for transition to 100% fossil free energy.¹⁶ His proposals would provide 3.9 million 40-year construction jobs and 2.0 million 40-year operation jobs for the energy facilities alone, the sum of which would exceed the 3.9 million jobs lost in the conventional energy sector; whether the jobs were of comparable quality would depend on various factors, including labor supply and union representation.

World War II mobilization models: The “Climate Mobilization Victory Plan” developed by Ezra Silk for The Climate Mobilization calls for a mobilization modeled on homefront mobilization for World War II.¹⁷ It includes a federal jobs guarantee similar to that proposed above coordinated by a Mobilization Labor Board:

The Mobilization Labor Board will coordinate the federally-financed program, but the jobs will be distributed and organized locally by municipal governments and non-profit organizations. Federal funds for labor and materials will be distributed based on the following criteria:

- Does the work help move America rapidly towards a net zero greenhouse gas emissions economy?

¹⁴ “The Clean Energy Future,” Labor Network for Sustainability, 350.org, Synapse Energy Economics http://www.labor4sustainability.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/cleanenergy_10212015_main.pdf

¹⁵ Robert Pollin et al, “Green Growth,” Center for American Progress and Political Economy Research Institute, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

http://www.peri.umass.edu/fileadmin/pdf/Green_Growth_2014/GreenGrowthReport-PERI-Sept2014.pdf
Summarized in Brecher <http://www.labor4sustainability.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/GreenGrowthReview.pdf>

¹⁶ Mark Z. Jacobson et al, “100% clean and renewable wind, water, and sunlight (WWS) all-sector energy roadmaps for the 50 United States”

<https://web.stanford.edu/group/efmh/jacobson/Articles/I/USStatesWWS.pdf>

¹⁷ Ezra Silk, *The Climate Mobilization Victory Plan* The Climate Mobilization. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0Bze7GXvl3ywrSGxYWDVXM3hVUm8/view>



- Does the work help remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere?
- Does the work combat the 6th mass extinction of species?
- Does the work help transition America to an environmentally sustainable economy that is durable enough to last long into the future?

Once in place, the scale of the job guarantee program will grow as private sector

employment declines, and vice versa. The American job guarantee we envision would be comprehensive, employing up to 20 million people, depending on the availability of private sector employment, and only allowing for frictional unemployment (brief periods of unemployment as people switch jobs) for those who are ready and willing to work.

A World War II-style mobilization is also proposed in the 2014 LNS article “If Not Now, When: A Labor Movement Plan to Address Climate Change.”¹⁸ It is based on the need to reduce carbon dioxide emissions to near zero by 2050.

A labor reserve of more than 20 million workers is available to go to work protecting the climate. However, ways will be needed to redirect workers to the growing employment sectors. During World War II, this was done by the War Labor Board, which actively recruited workers to regions and industries where they were most needed and controlled wages to limit competitive bidding for scarce labor. Government took the leading role in the rapid expansion of education, training, child care, and housing for the new workforce.

A CJG program is likely to be most compatible with climate programs that include an emergency mobilization designed to utilize all available human resources. More selective strategies may be more efficient in some ways, but they are less likely to adequately address either the climate emergency or the jobs deficit.

Alongside these various climate protection strategies are Climate Action Plans that have developed at local, state, national, corporate, and institutional levels. They similarly entail differing mixtures of jobs. CAPs can provide another vehicle for integrating CJG with the need for climate protection action at every level.

¹⁸ Jeremy Brecher, Ron Blackwell, and Joe Uehlein, “If Not Now, When? A Labor Movement Plan to Address Climate Change,” *New Labor Forum*, July 29, 2014. http://www.labor4sustainability.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/NLF541793_REV1.pdf



7. MESHING THE JOBS GUARANTEE WITH CLIMATE JOBS

The jobs guarantee, like the WPA, is based on hiring people without regard to their existing skills and then matching people with available jobs. The jobs created by climate policy will not automatically fit the workers in the CJG program. Conversely, the jobs proposed by most current JG proposals, while worthy, will only incidentally include jobs that help protect the climate. How can a climate jobs guarantee contribute to massive, rapid transition to climate safety and at the same time to a massive, rapid reduction of poverty and economic marginalization?

This problem arises in part because the workforce has effectively been divided into a low-wage, low-job quality sector in which people of color, women, youth, and other disfavored groups have been concentrated and a higher-wage, more secure sector which disproportionately includes white men. Those in the higher sector have a far greater opportunity to acquire skills, apprenticeship, union membership, connections, education, and opportunities to move upward. Those in the lower sector are disproportionately excluded from all these.

Many of the millions of jobs required to protect the climate will be infrastructure jobs that generally require skills acquired through apprenticeship, education, advanced training, and opportunity to work in favored jobs and industries. But as Tcherneva notes, infrastructure alone is not a particularly effective means of ensuring full employment, given that many infrastructure jobs require high skill level and are male dominated. A JG program must create opportunities for those who are less skilled or incapable of performing intense manual labor.¹⁹

Fortunately, the transition to a climate safe, fossil free economy will entail millions of jobs that do not require a high skill level and are not limited by gender.

The report “Green New Deal” by Data for Progress details a wide array of climate-protecting jobs that would be appropriate to the JG workforce.²⁰ It divides these into jobs that require “minimal experience or on-the-job training” and those that require “some experience, education, or certification.”

¹⁹ “Sunrise Jobs Guarantee Policy Primer.”

²⁰ Greg Carlock, Emily Mangan, and Sean McElwee, “A Green New Deal” *Data for Progress*, September 2018, p. 20.

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5aa9be92f8370a24714de593/t/5ba14811032be48b8772d37e/1537296413290/GreenNewDeal_Final_v2_12MB.pdf



MINIMAL EXPERIENCE OR ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

- Weatherization and energy efficiency improvements
- Waste removal and recycling
- Tree-planting
- Wetland restoration
- Brownfield restoration
- Pest management
- Soil health testing and remediation
- Invasive and exotic species removal
- Resilient road construction
- Pedestrian and bike lane construction
- Open and recreational space creation
- Building rehabilitation, remediation, and hardening
- Disaster preparedness training
- Sewer and water main upgrades
- Stormwater management
- Administrative support

SOME EXPERIENCE, EDUCATION, OR CERTIFICATION

- Energy auditing
- Building electrification
- Renewable energy systems installation - solar, wind, geothermal
- Mass transport electrification
- Energy storage technology
- Grid modernization and resilience
- Water and wastewater treatment
- Electric vehicle and biofuel integration
- Landfill upgrades and methane capture
- Sustainable agriculture and soil restoration
- Community education
- Communications

Five policies are required to make climate jobs programs mesh with the CJG:

1. Priority in climate programs to jobs covered under the CJG.
2. Training within the CJG to help workers move from “minimum experience” to “some experience” jobs. An example would be training weatherization workers to perform more sophisticated “deep efficiency” retrofits. Programs like Oakland’s Green Jobs for All and Emerald Cities can provide considerable experience with such workforce development.



3. Apprenticeship and job training to equip CJG workers to move into permanent climate jobs in the public and private sectors. This may require tailoring and greatly expanding apprenticeship programs and preference for CJG candidates.
4. Preference for hiring CJG workers in publicly funded climate programs.
5. Means to transfer CJG work units to the public and private sectors. This could include, for example, turning CJG work units into municipal agencies and/or allowing them to become subcontractors to the private or government sectors.

These policies would build the CJG into the core of climate protection programs. At the same time they would shape the CJG to maximize its contribution to climate protection.

8. HOW A CLIMATE JOBS GUARANTEE WOULD WORK

A federal jobs guarantee will require federal legislation, although smaller-scale experiments can be tried out first at state and local levels. The Department of Labor or another federal agency will host the program and establish guidelines. These could include priority for particular populations such as minorities excluded from the workforce and types of projects like residential energy efficiency.

Requests for proposals (RFPs) will invite public, nonprofit, and cooperative agencies to submit proposals. Approved proposals will be listed in a Jobs Bank for job seekers and will be implemented by the organizations submitting them.

Local agencies will publicize the CJG, especially to those populations most in need of it. Interested people will be encouraged to visit their local One-Stop Jobs Centers, which will serve as the information and intake hubs for the CJG. Those visiting the Job Centers will be told about the CJG opportunities along with other options. Since the program will be run so that jobs are available to all applicants, those who accept a CJG job will be hired and go to work.

Training, education, and apprenticeship programs will be designed to meet the needs of program participants, JG projects, and the wider economy. The program will construct ladders into higher-level employment in the private and public sectors. Participants will be free to leave and seek jobs in private and public sectors. Conversely, those who leave the program will be eligible to return if conditions elsewhere lead them to wish to do so.



9. PAYING FOR THE CJG

In the long run a transition to a fossil free economy will not only pay for itself; it will save money compared to fossil fuel “business as usual.” A jobs guarantee program will pay a large part of its cost through the reductions it will allow in unemployment insurance, food stamps, Medicaid, and other social programs and the value added to the economy by the goods and services it produces – in particular goods and services that reduce the staggering cost of climate change.

Our society is currently wasting vast resources. Tens of millions of potential workers are not working. Trillions of dollars – largely provided by the government – sit idle in corporate coffers. Much of the cost of a CJG will ultimately be paid for by mobilizing such unused and misused resources.

Large investments currently go to maintaining, replacing, and expanding fossil fuel infrastructure. With a fossil freeze, that investment stream can be redirected to building a fossil free economy. All the money that would have gone for fossil fuel infrastructure can be placed in investment funds to replace lost energy jobs.

The fossil fuel industry can and should bear much of the burden for the damage it does to humanity and the planet through taxes, fees, permit costs, and other charges which can be used to pay for the CJG. This can be done at a state as well as a local level, for example the fees charged under the Washington state climate jobs referendum plan.²¹

Local and state governments are now suing fossil fuel corporations for the damage they have done to people and the environment. Under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA – known as the Superfund law) the EPA has the authority to compel polluters to pay for the damage they have done to the environment – even if it happened long before. Comparable legislation could hold major fossil fuel producers and emitters responsible for the colossal damage they have done to the atmosphere – and the colossal cost of remediating it.

The United States now spends as much on the military as the next seven highest spenders. The use of this money, aside from pure waste, has been a series of wars, many of them illegal under national and international law, none of which has been successful, all of which have caused incalculable human and material harm, and none of which have contributed to the security of the American people. Many of them have been motivated by the

²¹ Sasha Abramsky, “This Washington State Ballot Measure Fights for Both Jobs and Climate Justice,” *The Nation*, July 20, 2018 <https://www.thenation.com/article/green-new-deal-evergreen-state/>

pursuit of fossil fuels and all have contributed to global warming. Transfer of funds from the military budget to the CJG would enhance the security of individuals and our country.

Many advocates of a JG see one of its principal benefits as countercyclical economic stimulus. To play this role requires periodic governmental deficit spending. Public borrowing can take place through bond sales or by the Fed buying infrastructure bonds, just as it bought Treasury securities in 1940 to finance the World War II. Public-purpose banks, credit unions, and investment and loan funds can provide more decentralized financial resources, especially for smaller-scale and community-based projects.

The economic growth generated by the CJG, along with the sources listed above, is likely to provide a substantial part of the funds required for it. New taxes will need to provide only a small part, if any, of the cost of the CJG.

10. THE CJG AND UNIONS

In November, 1936, WPA director Harry Hopkins signed an agreement assuring the Workers Alliance of America, a merger of several unemployed organizations, the right to organize relief workers.²² The Workers Alliance functioned as a proto-union in the WPA, striking, protesting grievances, and organizing mass demonstrations and marches to maintain and expand the program. It worked with the AFL and the nascent CIO to demand union scale for skilled workers, a minimum payment for WPA workers, and collective bargaining for all workers on work-relief projects.²³ Many WPA workers used their organizing experience there to become organizers in the new CIO. As the WPA wound down and the private economy revived, many former Workers Alliance activists became leaders in the new industrial unions.

Today a CJG could similarly make a significant contribution to rebuilding the labor movement. The right to organize, bargain collectively, engage in concerted action on the job, and retain basic Constitutional rights at work should be guaranteed for workers in CJG programs. This should provide a large new potential base for organized labor. Workers should be free to exercise these basic rights in ways of their own choosing, without being limited by the strictures of current public and private sector labor law. They should be free to experiment with new forms of labor organization, such as multi-union representation and minority unionism.

Full employment was a central labor objective from the Great Depression to the Vietnam War.²⁴ Today full employment remains a labor movement

²² Franklin Folsom, *Impatient Armies of the Unemployed*, (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1991) p. 419.

²³ Associated Press, "Proposes to Form Relief Man Union: Organization of Work Relief Personnel May Be Attempted," *Hope [AR] Star*, April 16, 1935, pg. 1. United Press International, [AFL May Unionize Men on Work-Relief.](#) *Jefferson City [MO] Post-Tribune*, April 15, 1935, pg. 2.

²⁴ Edmund F. Wehrle, "Guns, Butter, Leon Keyserling, the AFL-CIO, and the Fate of Full Employment



theme. For example, in a 2016 speech AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka said,

By accepting the fictional notion of a natural rate of unemployment, and the idea that monetary policy cannot permanently lower unemployment, the Fed devalued the concept of full employment. In doing so, it lowered the importance of jobs and wages in the national economic conversation.²⁵

Trumka asks, “How do we know when we reach full employment?” and answers, “At a minimum, when wages rise with productivity in a sustained way.”²⁶

The interest of different unions in a JG and/or CJG may vary somewhat. Unions that might hope to organize JG workers would have a direct interest in the program. Unions that currently represent workers who make less than \$15 per hour would see major gains for their members if the JG causes a de facto rise in the wage floor in the private and sectors. Organization of workers in the JG is also likely to significantly increase the bargaining power of workers in other low-wage sectors and strengthen their interest and ability to organize. Unions representing workers in higher-paid sectors will see less immediate benefit. They will gain, however, from a labor-friendlier overall environment and a substantial increase in apprenticeship programs, which form an important part of the program and budget of many unions, especially in the construction trades. The expansion of infrastructure jobs beyond the CJG for the transition to a fossil free economy will of course create mass employment opportunities for construction, manufacturing, and other workers in higher-paid sectors.²⁷

11. PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

A lively debate in policy circles has raised a series of issues concerning the JG. In evaluating these issues, it is important to keep in mind that there are few things capitalists, employers, and the wealthy loathe more than any kind of jobs guarantee. The venom of the attack on Upton Sinclair’s 1934 End Poverty In California (EPIC) campaign, for example, embodied this class hatred. Opposition is likely to be fierce today as well. Polling indicates that despite the broad popularity of the JG, it is strongly opposed by the 1%. Michael Sadowsky of Civis says, “It’s rare to see an issue with such a strong income divide. Republicans who make less than 25,000 per year are more

Economics,” *The Keep*, January 2004.

https://thekeep.eiu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1017&context=history_fac

²⁵ Richard Trumka, “Trumka: Monetary Policy Must Promote Shared Prosperity,” AFL-CIO, June 14, 2016. <https://aflcio.org/speeches/trumka-monetary-policy-must-promote-shared-prosperity>

²⁶ This definition, based on the wage impact of employment, does not necessarily imply the definition of full employment generally used by JG advocates that anyone who wants a job can have one.

²⁷ “Jobs for Tomorrow: Canada’s Building Trades and Net Zero Emissions” by Canada’s Building Trades Unions <http://columbiainstitute.ca/news-events/2017-jobs-tomorrow-canada-s-building-trades-and-net-zero-emissions> shows that meeting Canada’s climate goals could generate “over 3.9 million direct jobs in the building trades by 2050, and 19.8 million jobs if induced, indirect, and supply-chain jobs are included.”



supportive than Democrats who make more than \$150,000.”²⁸ Not surprisingly, the right has already trained its guns on the idea.

Critics also point out that even within the Democratic Party the idea has long had only lip service. In an article called “Democrats Are Rushing Into Job Guarantee. It Could Be a Huge Mistake,” Jonathan Chait argues against such “rushing in.” “Managing and overseeing \$500 billion a year in open-ended employment subsidies, while safeguarding against direct embezzlement or the use of public labor for private gain, is a staggering bureaucratic challenge.” In addition, there are “plenty of better-developed policies that can help lift incomes for poor people” that would compete with the JG for funding. He does not oppose the idea entirely, however; he calls Cory Booker’s bill for a three-year pilot program in 15 communities “a sensible step to test out the job guarantee concept and work out the kinks.”

Economist Robert J. Samuelson describes the jobs guarantee as a “loony” economic agenda that in practice “would almost certainly be a disaster.”²⁹ He identifies a string of problems. The JG would “add to already swollen federal budget deficits.” It probably underestimates overall spending because if Medicare and child-care subsidies are provided, “there will be pressures to provide it for most workers.” Otherwise, “uncovered workers might stage a political rebellion or switch from today’s low-paying private-sector jobs to the better paid public-service jobs.” The extra spending and higher wages might cause inflation.

Other questions are posed by economist Timothy Taylor. Does the federal government have the managerial competence to oversee the creation of so many jobs? Is there a skill mismatch between what the jobless can do and what actually needs doing? Is there a similar geographic mismatch? With a jobs guarantee he maintains “you can’t fire people.” And state and local governments would replace their employees by ones paid for by the federal government.³⁰

Josh Bivens compares the jobs guarantee proposals to job creation recommendations he has developed for the Economic Policy Institute.³¹ He says the benefits of the jobs guarantee can be realized by macroeconomic policy that ensures enough aggregate demand to create full employment combined with public investment to create jobs and provide goods and services that private markets won’t. He says that if we can’t “keep the Federal Reserve from prematurely hitting the economy’s brake and intentionally

²⁸ Sean McElwee, Colin McAuliff and Jon Green, “Why Democrats Should Embrace a Federal Jobs Guarantee,” *The Nation*, March 20, 2018.

²⁹ Robert J. Samuelson, “Bernie Sanders’s job guarantee: Is it a boondoggle?” *Washington Post* May 6, 2018. Pavlina R. Tcherneva replies in “The Job Guarantee and the Economics of Fear,” Levy Institute, May 6, 2018. http://www.levyinstitute.org/pubs/op_55.pdf

³⁰ Timothy Taylor’s original posting “The Job Guarantee Controversy” appears at his blog *The Conversable Economist* at <http://conversableeconomist.blogspot.com/2018/04/the-job-guarantee-controversy.html>

³¹ Josh Bivens, “How do our job creation recommendations stack up against a job guarantee?” *Economic Policy Institute Working Economics Blog*, April 12, 2018. <https://www.epi.org/blog/how-do-our-job-creation-recommendations-stack-up-against-a-job-guarantee/>



keeping us from reaching full employment” then “I don’t think we’re going to pass something as ambitious” as the job guarantee plan. Bivens also lists a number of possible problems with implementing jobs guarantee proposals. Workers’ response to growth and contraction in the private economy could play havoc with the program. Workers in the program could be subject to stigma. Government doesn’t have the public managerial capacity for a program of this size. The cost of the program could lead to public rejection. And the program could grow too large if lower-paid workers who are employed elsewhere decided to join it.

Many of the arguments against a JG boil down to the assertion it is too radical and too disruptive. A surprising number of arguments amount to pointing out that it has never been done before – specifically, that the Democratic Party has never actually proposed or tried to implement anything like it. However, the American public today appears to be interested in radical solutions that might address our intractable problems – witness the popularity of both Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump in the last presidential elections.

Various other issues and problems should be considered by those who might be sympathetic to the CJG. From the point of view of climate projection, would other models such as the Obama administration’s Recovery Act provide a better approach? Can existing governments and nonprofits provide the necessary jobs, or will new institutions like a new generation of nonprofit developers be required? How will a CJG mesh with private sector climate work? And will the JG create pressures to work for people who should not have to work, such as those caring for young children, the disabled, and the elderly to have to go to work anyway?

Most of the arguments that are being made pro and con the jobs guarantee could have been made – and in fact have been – at any time in the past century. However, there are two compelling problems today that must be addressed either by a climate jobs guarantee or by some other means. One is the enormous growth of what used to be called the “underclass”: Half of the potential working population is unemployed, involuntarily working part-time, not even looking for work, or employed at less than \$16 per hour without health and other benefits. The other is the existential threat of climate change. The most important question about the CJG is whether there is a program that will do better at meeting these two challenges.

12. PUBLIC OPINION AND POLITICS

Several elected leaders and candidates, generally progressive Democrats, have advocated a JG or CJG. Several JG bills have been submitted to Congress. Sen. Bernie Sanders has announced he will submit a bill, though he has not yet done so. The Campaign for America’s Future has promoted the



idea as has former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich.³²

Some preliminary public opinion polling has been conducted on the JG and CJG ideas. Results include:

- Fifty-one percent of voting eligible adults said they would be *more likely* to support a candidate running on a Green Job Guarantee—with only 20 percent opposed.
- Forty-eight percent of voting eligible adults said they would be more likely to support a candidate who was running on 100% Renewable Energy by 2030.
- Young people are far more likely to support a candidate running on 100% Renewable Energy and Green Jobs. More than half of individuals under 30 said they would be *more supportive* of a candidate running on 100% Renewable Energy or Green Jobs with only 15 percent saying 100% Renewable Energy would make them *less likely* and 10 percent saying the same about Green Jobs. Net support for a candidate is also high for voters aged 30 to 44 years and still positive for older voters.³³
- Thirty-five percent of Trump voters supported a Green Job Guarantee and 36 percent opposed.³⁴

Within the Democratic Party the CJG may be “a sword sent to divide,” dividing the corporate wing of the party from the democratic wing. But a CJG might also become a common program unifying the environmental and labor constituencies of the Democratic Party.

It is hard to envision the CJG being implemented by legislation alone without a context of popular upheaval. And without mass popular mobilization it is difficult to imagine a CJG surviving the probable onslaught of those who have rolled back other full employment programs in the past. But it is hard to envision a better program around which to promote such a popular mobilization. The climate crisis confronts us with a critical need that may help lift the JG from an idle speculation to a realistic possibility, indeed, a necessity.

32 “Good Jobs for All” Guarantee: Poling and Analysis,” Campaign for America’s Future.”

<http://campaignforamericasfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Job-Guarantee-One-Pager-1.pdf> ;

Robert Reich, “A Federal Jobs Guarantee,” May 22, 2018 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eec9iFfmxbw>

33 “Green New Deal” p. 26.

34 “Green New Deal” p. 25. For more details on polling results see McElwee, McAuliffe and Green above.

13. NEXT STEPS

The CJG working group drawn together by Sunrise lists as the areas it needs to address content, goals, strategy, external targets, elections, movements, and legislators. It has established sub-groups on policy, movement outreach, political strategy, and other foci to address these areas. It aims to influence emerging legislation and inject the CJG into discussion in the early presidential states. It has reached out to a range of environmental, labor, justice, and other organizations. Next steps might include one or more expert studies to lay out the details about the need for and functioning of a CJG and preparation of educational materials targeted to specific constituencies.

Advocates argue that, based on the experience of the WPA and other jobs programs around the world, a JG program could be up and running in a matter of months. However, it would also be possible to start by testing the idea with pilot versions at local, state, and/or national levels. For example, Cory Booker's Federal Jobs Guarantee Development Act would provide federal grants to fund a pilot jobs guarantee and provide eight weeks of training in 15 localities in at least four rural and six urban areas that have unemployment at least 1.5 times as high as the national rate.³⁵ In a *Yes!* Alan Aja, William Darity, Jr., and Darrick Hamilton have proposed that cities institute a "municipal jobs guarantee" without waiting for federal legislation.³⁶ A CJG phase-in focused on climate jobs for youth might be particularly appealing, given the wide concern about young people's detachment from the world of work and the strong support for a CJG that polls reveal among youth.

14. QUESTIONS FOR POTENTIAL CJG ADVOCATES

There are strong arguments from climate, jobs, and justice perspectives for a climate jobs guarantee. There are also concrete proposals for how to design a climate jobs guarantee and a nascent movement to implement them. But there are a number of questions potential CJG advocates should address as they consider making a wholehearted commitment.

1. Is supporting the CJG – under that or some other name -- useful and important?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the "Climate Jobs

³⁵ Federal Jobs Guarantee Development Act of 2018. <https://www.scribd.com/document/376916448/Federal-Jobs-Guarantee-Development-Act-of-2018>

³⁶ Alan A. Aja, William A. Darity, Jr., and Darrick Hamilton, "How Cities Can Do Better Than the Fight for \$15," *Yes!*, October 6, 2017. <https://www.yesmagazine.org/new-economy/how-cities-and-towns-can-do-better-than-the-fight-for-15-20171006>



Guarantee” frame and name in contrast to a “Green New Deal,” “Climate Jobs,” or other alternatives?

3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of a CJG policy in contrast to other possible policy orientations such as a public utility model for climate employment, minimum standards for climate jobs, “just transition” priority for fossil fuel workers threatened by climate policies, empowering frontline communities, full-employment macroeconomic policies, public investment, or other alternatives? To what extent can these be made complementary or at least compatible? How should we balance our emphasis among them?
4. Do CJG plans need to be modified or rejected due to any of the objections to them?
5. Can a CJG effectively integrate the needs of climate protection, low-income workers, and better-paid/unionized workers, and if so, how?
6. How can the CJG be made attractive to the labor movement? Are there unions that would be likely to support it at an early stage? Could the Labor for Single Payer petition/resolution model be used to test the waters?³⁷
7. Can a CJG program be designed to serve undocumented immigrant workers?
8. Should a CJG program be combined with a guaranteed income or other plan for those for whom a job is not the appropriate option?
9. Are there key bottom line positions that advocates should insist on? For example, jobs above the poverty line for all who want them and zero GHG emissions by 2050.

³⁷ Labor Campaign for Single Payer <https://www.laborforsinglepayer.org>