

FACT SHEET

How State and Local Governments Can Make Climate Jobs Good Jobs

By David Madland and Terry Meginniss | October 9, 2020

1. Promote good relationships between workers and employers

Labor peace and neutrality agreements, project labor agreements, and community workforce agreements can reduce labor strife¹, improve the quality of goods and services, and expand work opportunities in communities that are in need. These strategies need to be properly crafted to withstand common legal challenges.

See also: [“5 Ways State and Local Governments Can Make Climate Jobs Good Jobs”](#) by David Madland and Terry Meginniss

2. Protect existing compensation standards with prevailing wage requirements

Prevailing wage laws ensure that private companies hired or subsidized by taxpayer dollars for government projects pay wages and benefits at levels that don't undermine local standards or market wages and benefits. Prevailing wage standards² have long been a feature of federal contracting and have also been used in some state and local governmental projects. But the use of prevailing wage standards at the state and local level is spotty, and expanding their use can have significant benefits for workers.

3. Use workers' boards to promote high standards

A handful of states have enacted procedures for the establishment of wage boards or workers' boards. These boards³ include representatives of workers, employers, and the public and are empowered to set wage, benefit, training, and safety standards that exceed minimum-wage levels and require compensation at levels sufficient to sustain families. In implementing a wage board or workers' board model, it will be important to carefully define who may serve on the board and include provisions that promote worker participation.

4. Expand access to apprenticeships and other training provided by joint labor-management partnerships

In most communities, highly skilled jobs pay the highest compensation. State-regulated apprenticeship programs⁴ are a traditional means by which the unskilled can gain access to these jobs. Developing a governmental program of fostering apprenticeship opportunities can be a tool for building middle-class jobs as well as empowering communities of color and economically marginalized communities.

5. Ensure compliance with workplace laws

Nearly all state and local governments have laws that supplement federal employment standards. But nearly all governments devote insufficient resources to ensuring compliance with those laws. To address this deficiency and ensure compliance with general workplace standards as well as government contract-specific standards, some state and local governments have developed co-enforcement programs that enlist unions and pro-worker organizations in the compliance effort. Co-enforcement⁵ works best as a partnership to ensure vulnerable workers know their rights and feel comfortable coming forward to report violations.

The Climate Jobs National Resource Center and the Center for American Progress can help advise advocates interested in pursuing any of these policies.

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Endnotes

1 David Madland and Alex Rowell, "How State and Local Governments Can Strengthen Worker Power and Raise Wages" (Washington: Center for American Progress Action Fund, 2017), available at <https://www.americanprogressaction.org/issues/economy/reports/2017/05/02/166640/state-local-governments-can-strengthen-worker-power-raise-wages/>.

2 Ibid.

3 Kate Andrias, David Madland, and Malkie Wall, "A How-To Guide for State and Local Workers' Boards" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2019), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/reports/2019/12/11/478539/guide-state-local-workers-boards/>.

4 Madland and Rowell, "How State and Local Governments Can Strengthen Worker Power and Raise Wages."

5 David Madland and Malkie Wall, "American Ghent: Designing Programs to Strengthen Unions and Improve Government Services" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2019), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/reports/2019/09/18/474690/american-ghent/>.