



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Tuesday, January 27, 2009

Contact:  
John Anthony  
202.778.1639

## Workers, Builders Join with Energy Advocates in 'Rebuilding America' Initiative

*They say, 'Put us to work' reducing energy waste in America's buildings and call for \$20 billion in spending for economic recovery.*

WASHINGTON – America's builders and contractors joined today with a diverse coalition of labor and industry leaders and energy policy advocates in calling for a comprehensive energy savings and jobs program to retrofit 50 million buildings by 2020. Spearheaded by the Energy Future Coalition, "Rebuilding America" is designed to cut the buildings' energy use by 30 percent. Congress would need to direct \$20 billion from the pending economic recovery package to retrofit 4 million buildings in the next two years and put the initiative on track to reach its goal.

Renovating large numbers of homes, schools, and commercial buildings to improve their energy efficiency can put 200,000 craftsmen and laborers to work immediately, while providing lasting value by cutting consumers' utility bills and greenhouse gas emissions. "Rebuilding America" proposes to use existing state energy programs and give state governors the authority to deploy the funds through utilities, public power entities, and other existing entities, under supervision of the state utility commission where appropriate.

Bob Baugh, Executive Director of the AFL-CIO Industrial Union Council, said, "The nation's building trades and manufacturing workers have been knocked flat on their backs by the economic downturn. Retrofitting America's buildings for energy efficiency can put both back to work immediately and deliver needed energy savings to consumers."

"Investing in more efficient buildings will put thousands of construction workers back on the job and money back into our economy," said Stephen Sandherr, chief executive officer of the Associated General Contractors of America. "More important, these investments will improve our energy independence, clean our air and save taxpayers millions in energy costs for years to come."

Jerry Gorski, 2009 ABC National Chairman, said, "We stand ready to help pull our nation out of recession. Associated Builders and Contractors' more than 25,000 members nationwide can put this stimulus money to work immediately, with a double payoff – our members and their employees get back to work, and consumers get the benefit of lower energy bills. This is a high priority for our industry."

“This proposal is urgently needed, and we look forward to working for its successful implementation,” said Mark Cooper, Research Director for the Consumer Federation of America. “It is vital to balance the needs and interests of consumers and utilities to build an incentive structure that promotes energy efficiency in an effective and fair manner. Utilities can be fairly compensated for investments in conservation and low-emission alternatives where verifiable energy savings can be attributed to new utility investment and actions and where consumers share in the benefits of those investments and actions.”

Former Sen. Timothy Wirth, on behalf of the Energy Future Coalition Steering Committee, said, “The breadth of this coalition reflects the very strong public support for energy efficiency investments. ‘Rebuilding America’ will pay off with an immediate economic stimulus as well as being a good long-term investment in the economy. A failure to include a major investment in energy efficiency in the economic recovery package would be a tremendous mistake.”

#### Groups supporting Rebuilding America

AFL-CIO	Edison Electric Institute
AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department	Energy Future Coalition
Allianz of America	Intel
Associated Builders & Contractors	Jones Lang LaSalle
Associated General Contractors of America	National Wildlife Federation
Center for American Progress	Natural Resources Defense Council
Ceres	PG&E Corp. (Pacific Gas & Electric)
Con Edison	Polyisocyanurate Insulation Manufacturers Association
Consumer Federation of America	The Real Estate Roundtable
Copper Development Association	Sacramento Municipal Utility District
The Council on Competitiveness	United States Green Building Council

###

#### About the Energy Future Coalition

The Energy Future Coalition is a broad-based, nonpartisan alliance that seeks to bridge the differences among business, labor, and environmental groups and identify energy policy options with broad political support. The coalition aims to bring about changes in U.S. energy policy to address the economic, security and environmental challenges related to the production and use of fossil fuels with a compelling new vision of the economic opportunities that will be created by the transition to a new energy economy. [www.energyfuturecoalition.org](http://www.energyfuturecoalition.org)



## Rebuilding America and Creating Green Jobs

### The Goal

To put Americans back to work, lower their energy bills, and cut greenhouse gas emissions, President Obama should launch a Rebuilding America program that has a national goal of retrofitting 50 million buildings by 2020 to reduce their energy use by at least 30%. The President would allocate \$20 billion from the economic recovery package to jump start this initiative, which would then be self-sustaining. The program would both supplement and complement his campaign pledge to “weatherize at least one million low-income homes each year for the next decade, which can reduce energy usage across the economy and help moderate energy prices for all” and to reduce energy demand 15% by 2020.

### Rationale for *Rebuilding America*

- The U.S. buildings sector accounts for 70% of all electricity and 33% of all natural gas usage, and is responsible for 40% of all greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>1</sup>
- After mortgage payments, energy costs constitute the single largest monthly expense for homeowners.
- Renovating large numbers of homes, schools, and commercial buildings to improve their energy efficiency will generate millions of new jobs while cutting consumers’ utility bills and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Creating proven and effective retrofit programs at the state level and supporting existing energy efficiency delivery mechanisms will create the basis for sustained investment by utilities in building efficiency.

Much attention has been given by policymakers to the need for incorporating energy efficiency into new buildings – but home and business owners need relief from volatile energy costs today. Energy retrofits reduce energy consumption in existing buildings. Technologies include insulation, energy efficient windows, high efficiency boilers and furnaces, high efficiency appliances, programmable thermostats, compact fluorescent bulbs, and other high efficiency lighting technologies. Efficiency is by far the cheapest way of producing new energy supply – 3-4 cents per kilowatt-hour for energy savings vs. 8-10 cents per kilowatt-hour for electricity from a new power plant.

In California, a state with three decades of experience running efficiency programs, every dollar invested in energy efficiency has generated \$2 of economic benefits. Utility programs are a very efficient way to deliver these benefits to building owners, but only a handful of states have established programs to deliver efficiency on a large scale. *Rebuilding America* can jump-start that process.

---

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Energy Information Agency.

America's building sector is in crisis. Contractors are idle as new home construction slows to a trickle and commercial real estate construction falls off. Now is the ideal time to jump-start a green jobs market, using a skilled and underemployed work force that is ready and waiting. ***Rebuilding America*** can immediately put 200,000 craftsmen and laborers to work and stimulate a large secondary market in product and equipment sales.

### ***Rebuilding America: The Plan to Meet the Goal***

The key to renovating homes, schools, and commercial buildings on a large scale is to mobilize electric and gas utilities, which have longstanding customer relationships with building and home owners, as well as technical expertise and access to relatively low-cost capital. Many states, including California, Delaware, New York, and Vermont are already driving significant building renovations and large-scale energy efficiency improvements and will be able to respond quickly to new funding. Many states are creating new business models for their electric and gas utilities that allow ratepayers and utility companies to share in the savings from energy efficiency.

The President should, as part of the stimulus package, provide \$20 billion to the states on a population-weighted basis to renovate 4 million buildings.

- Using its existing authority<sup>2</sup> with an augmented funding level, the Department of Energy should convey these funds through state energy programs. States will allocate the funds to utilities, cooperatives, municipal utilities, other public power entities, and other existing deployment mechanisms, under supervision of the state utility commission where appropriate, for building energy retrofits, especially of homes, small businesses, and public schools. Utilities and others will provide rebates to building owners, sharing the cost for significant efficiency improvements, and will partner where feasible with local governments and school districts. States will select the appropriate business models for delivering the rebates.
- The Department of Energy, in collaboration with EPA, will establish guidance for states to ensure the effectiveness of the program, using tools for measuring building performance such as those offered under the EPA Energy Star program. Governors and state utility regulators or other controlling authority will provide oversight to ensure that the program achieves the desired results. A portion of the funding will be provided to build state utility commission capacity to evaluate and monitor program design and performance and to establish business models for continuing utility investment.
- All states that initiate a viable program within 12 months will be eligible for funding so that rebate money can be delivered to consumers as soon as possible.

The President and Congress should establish long-term frameworks that complement and extend the energy savings and other benefits created by the initial stimulus package.

---

<sup>2</sup> [http://apps1.eere.energy.gov/state\\_energy\\_program/](http://apps1.eere.energy.gov/state_energy_program/)

Energy efficiency should be the first priority for electricity planning and state utility commissions should establish business models and appropriate incentives to ensure that efficiency investments earn competitive returns for utilities.

A comprehensive program of education, skill development and worker placement is needed to help governments, businesses, efficiency providers and unions ensure that a highly skilled work force is available to implement wide-scale energy efficiency measures.

### ***Rebuilding America: Long-Term Objective***

Energy efficiency investments of this scale should be standard practice in every state, and the goal of ***Rebuilding America*** is to mobilize the contractor workforce and regulatory infrastructure for sustained long-term investment. Toward that end, the funds from ***Rebuilding America*** should be provided to the states with the condition that they be allocated as rebates to consumers, as directed by the state public utility commissions or other controlling authority. The commissions should be permitted to use a small share of the funds to develop the necessary mechanisms for reviewing utility programs, monitoring and evaluating results, and should report back to Congress and DOE, with the explicit goal of continuing a program of cost-effective investment by utilities after the federal funds are gone.