



Center for American Progress Action Fund



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Unprecedented business-labor-NGO coalition unveils ambitious proposal to retrofit 50 million buildings by 2020

Senators Brown and Merkley and Representative Welch discuss the benefits energy efficiency projects provide for job creation and economic growth

Rebuilding America urges comprehensive investment and standards for energy efficiency in buildings – to create hundreds of thousands of good paying jobs, stimulate economic growth, deliver savings to consumers and reduce energy waste that harms the environment

Washington, DC— Leaders of labor, manufacturing and consumer and energy advocacy organizations today launched *Rebuilding America*, a diverse coalition with a shared commitment to wholesale investment in the energy efficient retrofit of 50 million buildings by 2020. More than 50 of the most prominent businesses, manufacturers, labor unions and trade associations have endorsed the goals of the *Rebuilding America* proposal. They were joined by congressional leaders who embraced the coalition's goal while detailing the benefits that retrofit projects provide for job creation and economic growth.

Rebuilding America is a joint initiative of the Energy Future Coalition and the Center for American Progress Action Fund, and in addition to today's proposal both organizations sent a letter to every member of the U.S. Senate, urging more ambitious steps in pending energy and climate legislation to seize the enormous opportunity in building retrofits.

Rebuilding America is a first-of-its-kind effort to unite the voices of everyone with a stake in energy efficiency through retrofits, including:

- **Builder and contractor associations** representing thousands of large and small businesses across the country.

- **Manufacturers** that make the insulation, lighting, and mechanical systems for efficient buildings.
- **Millions of labor union members** represented through the AFL-CIO, the Building and Construction Trades Department, and Change to Win.
- **Consumer groups**, such as the Consumer Federation of America, whose members understand that retrofits equal consumer savings.
- **Financial institutions and insurance companies** who see new market opportunities for efficiency investments in buildings that will strengthen their asset base.
- **Energy and environmental advocates**, who view energy efficiency as the cleanest and cheapest way to meet our climate goals.

While Congress has included important provisions on building retrofits in pending legislation, much more should be done to capture the scale of the opportunity. In its letter, *Rebuilding America* urged Congress to:

- **Establish** a stand-alone, national Energy Efficiency Resource Standard of 10% by 2020.
- **Direct** at least one-third of utility allowances for energy efficiency while increasing the state allowance allocation for renewables and efficiency to 10% through 2030, dedicating 25% to retrofits.
- **Support** innovative financing tools for energy efficiency including the Clean Energy Development Administration (CEDA) and its backing for Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Bonds.
- **Establish** provisions for accelerated depreciation and investment tax credits for advanced HVAC, smart meters, and other energy-efficient technologies and advanced appliances.
- **Link** federal financial support for retrofits to standards for job quality, skills training, reporting, and transparency to ensure consumer confidence and verifiable energy savings.

Building retrofits are an indispensable solution for economic recovery and a clean energy future that creates jobs, reduces consumer energy costs and curbs carbon pollution. Our plan:

- Creates and sustains 625,000 good jobs in construction, manufacturing, and related fields.
- Saves households an average of \$832 annually by 2030 as part of comprehensive energy/climate protection legislation.
- Avoids at least 42 million tons of carbon emissions per year, the equivalent of taking 85 million cars off the road by 2020.

“Investing in energy efficiency isn’t just the right thing to do, it’s the smart thing to do,” U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) said. “Across Ohio, entrepreneurs, businesses, and communities are leading the way in energy efficiency technologies and innovation. By retrofitting our buildings, we can cut energy costs for businesses, create clean energy jobs for workers, and ensure our energy independence.”

“Construction workers in every corner of this country are ready to get to work making buildings more energy efficient. Retrofitting buildings will create thousands of jobs and lower our energy use. That means more money in the pockets of working Americans,” said Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR). “I’m proud to be here today in support of this effort to get Americans back to work and transform our energy economy by using energy more wisely.”

“By investing in energy efficiency, we can create jobs that cannot be exported and provide a much-needed boost to our economy,” said Rep. Peter Welch (D-VT.), a member of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. “Vermont’s groundbreaking efficiency programs have proven that retrofits make sense – that they save consumers money, reduce carbon pollution and stimulate the economy. Now it’s time for the nation to follow Vermont’s lead and invest in the potential of efficiency.”

“The effort to rebuild America and reduce our nation's carbon footprint is a critically important initiative, both in an environmental and economic sense. The true test, however, will be whether Congress accedes to a ‘high-road’ approach that will provide quality careers through accredited skilled craft training programs,” said Mark H. Ayers, president of the AFL-CIO’s Building and Construction Trades Department.

“Energy efficiency is the best investment we can make in a low-carbon economy. It will create hundreds of thousands of new jobs and pay for itself with energy savings,” said Reid Detchon, executive director of the Energy Future Coalition. “As the Senate approaches historic action on climate and energy legislation, it should incorporate policies that will drive wide-scale building retrofits. Current Senate committee drafts fall short of what’s need to save consumers money and create jobs.”

Lonnie Coleman, President of the Mechanical Contractors Association of America said that, “together with our labor partners in the building and construction trades unions, we are proud members and avid backers of the very sound energy, climate remediation, and building infrastructure and workforce development policies that are included in the *Rebuilding America* initiative. Retrofitting buildings is where energy savings gains are most available, as the Energy Secretary said recently, ‘it’s not even low hanging fruit – it’s off the tree on the ground just waiting to be picked up.’”

"America cannot afford to wait for a real energy policy; our national, economic and environmental security is at stake," said Bracken Hendricks, senior fellow at the Center for American Progress. "The cheapest, cleanest, safest, and most reliable energy available today is the coal, oil, and gas we never have to burn at all. As Congress turns to a long term solution to global warming, our first choice should be energy efficiency, to protect consumers from rising energy bills and create good jobs today rebuilding American communities."

“We need to move quickly and boldly to harness the engine of green, energy efficient buildings, which represent the most cost-effective opportunity to protect the environment and drive tremendous economic savings,” said Rick Fedrizzi, president, CEO and founding chair, U.S. Green Building Council. “A comprehensive, nationwide commitment to commercial and residential building energy retrofits will save our families and businesses money, bolster our economy by creating green jobs, reduce air pollution, protect the climate and reduce our need for foreign sources of energy.”

“The upfront costs of these improvements will usually be more than offset by years of lower utility bills,” said Stephen Brobeck, executive director of the Consumer Federation of America. “Intelligently retrofitting homes to make them more energy efficient will, over time, save homeowners tens of billions of dollars.”

David Allen, executive vice president of McKinstry Co. stressed that, “*Rebuilding America* proposes exactly the right incentives to attract 'patient capital' to retrofit America's buildings. This is exactly the right prescription to lift the real estate sector, create skilled employment and help us all stop wasting so much energy.”

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Background

Rebuilding America is a joint initiative of the Center for American Progress Action Fund and the Energy Future Coalition. It has been endorsed by more than 50 organizations in the fields of finance, manufacturing, labor and energy advocacy.

Rebuilding America calls on our nation's leaders to adopt and implement a comprehensive national strategy to transform the market and stand up a retrofit industry that can renovate 50 million residential and commercial buildings by 2020 – 40% of the nation's building stock. Retrofitting that many homes and small businesses will require a total of \$500 billion in public and private investment and support approximately 625,000 sustained full-time jobs directly and indirectly each year throughout the decade, while saving consumers \$32 billion to \$64 billion on their energy bills each year for an estimated energy savings of \$685 billion through 2020.

The **Energy Future Coalition** is a broad-based, non-partisan 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.

The **Center for American Progress Action Fund** is the sister advocacy organization of the **Center for American Progress**. The Action Fund transforms progressive ideas into policy through rapid response communications, legislative action, grassroots organizing and advocacy, and partnerships with other progressive leaders throughout the country and the world. The Action Fund is also the home of the Progress Report.

For more information, see: http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/08/rebuilding_america.html or <http://www.energyfuturecoalition.org/What-Were-Doing/Energy-Efficiency/Rebuilding-America>.