Are Green Jobs “Good Jobs” for African Americans?

Algernon Austin

“All Just ‘Getting By’: Achieving Economic Security among African Americans”
Congressional Black Caucus Foundation
Annual Legislative Conference
September 25, 2009
Definition of a “Good Job”

- Has an hourly wage that provides at least 60 percent of the median household income annually
  - 2008 good-jobs wage: $14.51/hr
  - 2008 poverty-level wage: $10.59/hr
  - 2008 federal minimum wage: $5.85/hr, $6.55/hr
- Provides health insurance
- Provides a retirement plan

- White:
  - 1979: 36.3%
  - 2008: 31.5%

- Black:
  - 1979: 26.9%
  - 2008: 21.8%

Male
- 1979: 33.4%
- 2008: 24.1%

Female
- 1979: 0.0%
- 2008: 20.4%
Assessing Green Jobs Based on $100 Billion in Investments

- Estimating the number, quality and demographics
  - Based on Political Economy Research Institute’s industry flows
  - Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) employment requirements matrix
  - Links Current Population Survey demographic data to BLS industry data
50-60% of Green Jobs Will Have “Good-Jobs” Wages

Wage Quintile Distribution of Green Jobs

- First (lowest): 16%
- Second: 22%
- Third: 23%
- Fourth: 22%
- Fifth (highest): 17%
Educational Distribution of Workers in Green Jobs and of African-American Workers

- Less than high school: 16% (Green Jobs: 9%)
- High school: 39% (Green Jobs: 35%)
- Associate's or some college: 27%
- Bachelor's or higher: 18% (Green Jobs: 22%)
40% of Green Jobs are in the Construction Industry

Share of Workers in the Construction Industry

- White: 7.8%
- Hispanic: 12.9%
- Black: 4.1%
$100 Billion = 746,102 Green Jobs

- Expected number of black jobs: 84,720
- Percent of total: 11%
- Black share of total labor force: 11%

- 1/3 are union jobs
- 3/4 male jobs
- Should raise wages of non-college-educated workers 0.25% for each year of investment
Green Jobs Are “Good Jobs” for African Americans

• Broad-based green investments will increase the number of jobs available for black workers.
• Most of the jobs will have “good-jobs” wages.
• They will disproportionately benefit black males who have especially high unemployment rates.
Additional Reading