

# Labor and Global Warming Legislation

## How Will Unions and Working People be Affected?

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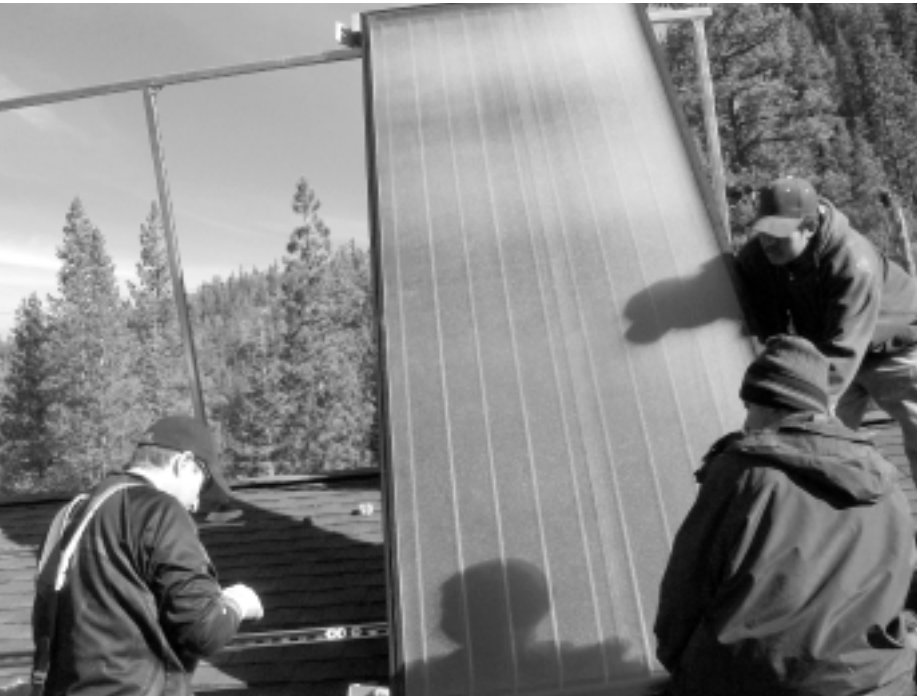
The state of California is about to begin implementing some of the strongest anti-global warming legislation in the country. AB 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act, will potentially bring with it important changes for labor. According to Labor Center Senior Labor Policy Specialist Carol Zabin, the impacts of

climate change legislation like the Public Utility Commission's efforts to make California buildings more energy efficient.

Apollo Alliance Western Regional Director Carla Din outlined the economic sectors that may be affected by AB 32. She said that the Air Resources Board expects impacts on agriculture, electricity, land use, manufacturing (of cement and semi-conductors), forests, oil and gas refining, transportation, waste and landfills. She encouraged labor unions to get involved with the AB 32 implementation process: "I see it as an opportunity to capitalize on this momentum in the state and in the nation—you have the skills and you have the experience to direct the state in how we can do this right," Din said.

Andrew Hoerner, Sustainable Economics Program director at the Oakland-based nonprofit Redefining Progress, believes that with a "well-designed implementation plan," AB 32 could have a positive impact on job creation in the state. One of the major implementation issues is how to avoid economic disadvantage for products produced in California that are competing with products produced in states without similar environmental regulations. Another major issue is the consideration of a cap and trade system that would cap the amount of carbon emitted in California and allow firms to trade carbon credits. If California does implement a cap and trade system, there are questions about whether or not current carbon emitters will be grandfathered in, or whether permits will be auctioned off and how the auction funds will be spent. A final major issue is how to ensure that workers receive appropriate training for new jobs that are created in the green economy.

The California Labor Federation's Workforce and Economic Development Program (WED) is following the AB 32 implementation process closely and is working to get affiliates to develop common goals and principles around AB 32 implementation. The Fed's Peter Cooper said, "For labor, we need to look at both the opportunities from the new economy and also the concerns that a lot of our affiliates have, that there really will be some job losses and new skills needed."



Workers installing a solar hot water heating system. Photo by Charles Youngflesh, courtesy of High Country Builders.

AB 32 on workers and unions will depend largely on the details of its implementation. Policies could be implemented in ways that lead to net job creation or net job loss, to high-quality jobs or to low-wage jobs.

These topics were addressed at a recent event sponsored by the UC Berkeley Labor Center, Apollo Alliance, Redefining Progress and the California Labor Federation's Workforce and Economic Development Program. The focus of the event was AB 32, the landmark legislation to reduce California's greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 (a reduction of about 25 percent) and to 80 percent of 1990 levels by 2050. The speakers also touched on green jobs like solar panel installation and the training that will be needed by workers who carry out those new green jobs, as well as other California

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In addition to getting Fed affiliates involved in AB 32 implementation, Cooper and the other staff at WED are looking at the workforce development needs that are arising in the green economy. They want to make sure apprenticeship programs are incorporating green jobs skills, and green

Hansen and others are working with State Senator Darrell Steinberg on a future bond measure that would fund green tech programs in high schools. But for the time being, Hansen encourages labor to make sure they have a seat at the table during negotiations on climate change implementa-

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jobs training funds go to programs that include labor union involvement and have a pipeline set up to connect trained workers to actual jobs.

Jay Hansen of the California State Building and Construction Trades Council said the building trades are expecting a large number of jobs will be created by retrofitting buildings for energy efficiency and are projecting a shortage of trained workers. To address this shortage, Hansen is encouraging the re-introduction of career tech programs into high schools. Those programs could train many new workers for entry-level green jobs, as well as address the huge problem of the California high school dropout rate.

tion and other green legislation development to ensure that issues like prevailing wages are included in the discussions. He also encourages labor-management partnerships: “We’ve got to partner with business or it’s not going to happen,” Hansen said.

Former State Assemblywoman Fran Pavley, the author of AB 32, recommends that labor “seize this environmental challenge and make it an economic opportunity.” As the panelists at the Labor Center’s event explain, AB 32 will only become an economic opportunity if the California labor movement and other stakeholders pay close attention to the details of its implementation.

## Green Jobs at the WED Conference

The Labor Center is helping develop a Green Jobs Workshop Track for the upcoming Building Workforce Partnerships Conference, to be held June 11–13, 2008 in Los Angeles. This annual conference is sponsored by the California Labor Federation’s Workforce and Economic Development Program (WED), the State of California and other partners. The event draws a diverse and increasingly national group of practitioners, academics, policy makers, labor unions and industry leaders to debate and explore the nexus of labor market realities, economic policy and access to good jobs. To learn more or to register online visit [www.wed-works.org](http://www.wed-works.org).

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## New Grants

### Exploring the Impact of the Green Economy on California’s Workforce

Funded by the UC Labor and Employment Research Fund, this grant will be used to host a conference for academics, labor unions, employers, green businesses, workforce development specialists and community groups from around California to address the research, technical assistance and communication needs in the development of a “green” labor market. This conference is a track at the California Labor Federation’s Workforce and Economic Development Conference in June 2008.

### Organizing in the Home- and Community-Based Care Industries

Funded by the UC Labor and Employment Research Fund, this research will document unionization efforts in the care industries through case studies of home care, child care, and services for people with developmental disabilities (DD).