

{CAMPUS★PROGRESS}

Building a Sustainable Future with Green Jobs

“We will put Americans to work making our homes and buildings more efficient so that we can save billions of dollars on our energy bills.” – President Barack Obama

Summary:

The United States is facing a convergence of crises. Our economy is in shambles and young people are entering the worst job market since the great depression, more and more young people are being sent overseas to fight wars over few remaining oil reserves, and the stability of our future is threatened by the violent repercussions of the climate crisis.

In order to build a sustainable economy, end our oil wars, and guarantee a livable planet for future generations, we need to wean ourselves off our addiction to fossil fuels. President Obama called for a price on carbon, deployment of renewable energy, and the creation of millions of green jobs by making our houses and buildings more energy efficient. Passing President Obama’s budget proposal for 2010 is an important step in putting our country back on track, but we need to get even more ambitious.

Problem:

- Greenhouse Gasses are accumulating in the atmosphere, warming up our climate and changing weather patterns. If nothing is done to address this problem, fresh water scarcity, sea level rise, and desertification will cause a global humanitarian crisis.
- The global economic crisis was spurred in part by the extreme increase in the price of oil. There isn’t enough oil to satisfy predicted world demand increase while alternatives already exist. What lacks is political will.
- The current unemployment rate in the United States is 8.1%, the highest it’s been in 25 years. We need to make investments to put Americans back to work. Our generation is graduating in the worst job market in many years.
- Energy prices have been steadily increasing due to increasing demand and shrinking supply of fossil fuels. A cap on carbon and deployment of renewable energy is the only thing that will stop the steady upward trend.
- Natural gas, oil and coal companies and utilities are deploying legions of lobbyists to reduce revenue from a cap and trade bill which would make consumers pay for their unwillingness to clean up their act.
- Inaction is not an option. Conservative legislators have been lying to the American public claiming that putting a price on carbon would cost \$3,100 to every family per year. The study they are citing actually says it will cost less than \$30. Inaction on the other hand would end up costing trillions of dollars in weather damage, lost productivity and the economic collapse of most developing economies.



Progressive Budget Priorities:

I. Cut global warming pollution and make polluters pay

The best scientific estimates (the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) say that we need to **reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25-40% below 1990 levels by 2020 and by 80-95% by 2050.** Anything below these targets is unacceptable as it will cause unacceptable sea level rise, extensive deforestation, and massive species extinction. **The cap and trade bill needs to auction 100% of pollution permits without using offsets.** The failure of the European Union's cap and trade bill is an example of what happens when these simple criteria aren't met. Consumer's energy bills spiked while corporations took in windfall profits, all this while causing a negligible decrease in emissions.

II. Power our nation with clean, renewable energy

We have unparalleled renewable energy resources in the United States. Using already available technology we can harness the power of the wind, sun and ground to produce much more than our current and projected energy use. We need to implement a national Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard to mandate that **30% of the electricity produced in the United States come from clean and renewable energy sources by 2020.** We must help states with less available resources achieve this goal by investing in workforce training programs to modernize the national electric grid and connect renewable energy rich areas to the rest of the country.

III. Reduce energy bills through energy efficiency

California implemented strict regulations to decrease the state's energy use during the first oil crisis in the late seventies. Since then, California's overall electricity use remained constant while its economy soared. We need to learn from the leadership exhibited by the state and go even further. We need to implement a Federal Energy Efficiency Resource Standard (EERS) to require utilities to reduce electricity demand by 15 percent and natural gas demand by 10 percent by 2020. We also need to build upon the \$5 billion provided in the Recovery Act for weatherization assistance in order to meet the dual objective of reducing the nation's greenhouse gas emissions and help low-income families save up to \$350 per year on energy bills.

Contact: For more information about higher education issues related to the 2010 budget, please contact:

Tommaso Nicholas Boggia | Climate Advocacy Associate | Campus Progress, Center for American Progress
(202) 478-6322 | tboggia@americanprogress.org