

# U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Introduces bill to empower fossil-fuel workers to train, find jobs in changing energy industry

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Washington, D.C. — Today, U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) introduced the [American Energy Worker Opportunity Act](#), which would provide critical resources and training opportunities to assist and empower workers whose jobs are affected by the energy industry's move toward renewable sources. Baldwin was joined by Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Bob Casey (D-PA), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Tina Smith (D-MN), and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA).

“For decades, America relied on fossil fuels to power our nation,” **said Sen. Baldwin.** “As we transition to a clean energy future, we cannot leave workers in these industries behind. The American Energy Worker Opportunity Act would create a worker-centered plan to support workers, their families and communities that have relied fossil-fuel production as our energy needs change. Our Build Back Better budget makes major investments in renewable energy and we must use this once-in-a generation opportunity to support our energy workforce through this transition.”

“We can't allow the workers who powered our country to get left behind as we adopt new technology and grow the renewable energy sector,” **said Sen. Brown.** “Often it's not a matter of starting over and retraining for a whole new career, we're not telling coalminers to go learn to code - it's just about updating your skills, taking a training course or two to get a job in a related field.”

“Workers in our coal mines, power plants, steel mills and other emission intensive

manufacturing sites provided the electricity and materials that have powered the American economy since the Industrial Revolution. We have a responsibility to ensure that these workers and their families are not left behind,” **said Sen. Casey.** “We also have a responsibility to confront the climate crisis, as impacts of Hurricane Ida and other natural disasters in Pennsylvania reminded us. This legislation would provide a worker-centered solution to mitigating the climate crisis while supporting the workers who have kept the lights on in this Nation for years.”

“Our energy veterans powered the world’s largest economy for a century,” **said Sen. Whitehouse.** “As we transition to cleaner forms of energy to prevent climate change from wreaking havoc on our economy, we need to make major investments in fossil fuel communities and the workers and their families who have given much to our country.”

“Across Colorado, I’ve heard concerns about the effects coal mine and power plant closures have on our communities,” **said Sen. Bennet.** “As we work to transition to a 21st century, clean energy economy, we must make sure that energy workers – who have powered our economy for decades – are at the forefront of our approach. The American Energy Worker Opportunity Act would provide critical wage replacement and health benefits to workers and invest in training and education programs to help them transition to new, good-paying jobs.”

“Transitioning to clean energy is a necessary step toward addressing climate change but we cannot leave behind the Americans who’ve worked tirelessly in the carbon-intensive energy production sector that has made our everyday lives possible up till now,” **said Sen. Duckworth.** “It’s critical for Congress to protect these workers and their families from poverty through new training and educational opportunities as well as provide them with the security of a paycheck and health benefits as they navigate new employment opportunities.”

“This bill prioritizes the energy workers who have powered America for generations,” **said Sen. Smith.** “President Biden’s Build Back Better agenda will create over a million jobs in clean energy over 10 years, and the assistance provided by this bill will allow those workers to take advantage of these new opportunities. I am grateful for the help of the unions to design a policy that addresses this critical need.”

“As we transform our energy system, we must also empower our workers who have spent their careers helping power our country,” **said Sen. Warren.** “I am

cosponsoring the American Energy Worker Opportunity Act to help support our workforce as we create good-paying union jobs in the renewable energy sector.”

The bill would create a worker transition program with wage supplements, health care benefits, education and training funds, and an additional education benefit for children of laid-off workers. It would include:

- Eligible workers: workers whose employment is terminated from a coal mine, coal-fired power plant, coal transport, or oil refinery, provided that the worker was employed continuously and full time for at least 12 months prior to layoff, with authority for the Secretary to add additional groups of fossil fuel-dependent workforces as employment impacts make it necessary.
- Wage supplement: workers will receive wage replacement or supplement in addition to assistance to maintain health benefits and contribute to retirement.
- Worker education and training: workers will be eligible for grants for allowable education and training up to and including a four-year degree
- Education for the children of dislocated workers: direct educational grants for the children of dislocated workers deemed eligible by the program for allowable education and training up to an including a four-year degree.

The proposal would also prioritize employers who plan to hire eligible workers for the clean energy grants created under the Build Back Better plan. It is endorsed by the United Mine Workers of America International, United Steelworkers (USW) International, the Utility Workers Union of America, AFL-CIO, BlueGreen Alliance, National Wildlife Federation, LCV, NRDC, and the Union of Concerned Scientists.

“The United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) has been clear that as we continue to move through an energy transition in the United States we need to stop leaving workers, families and communities behind. For us, the principles of a true transition are to; first, preserve as many UMWA jobs as possible; second, create new well-paying union jobs in the coal-producing areas of the country; and third, create a bridge for those workers who are forced to make a transition so that they do not fall into poverty,” **said Cecil E. Roberts, President of United Mine Workers of America International.** “This legislation fulfills that last principle, and I thank Senators Brown and Casey for introducing it and standing up for UMWA members, their families and their communities. As Congress considers how to approach energy transition, this must be part of the solution.” This legislation fulfills that last principle, and I thank Senators Brown, Casey, Whitehouse, Baldwin, Bennet, Duckworth, Smith and Warren for introducing it and standing up for UMWA

members, their families and their communities. As Congress considers how to approach energy transition, this must be part of the solution.”

“Our union remains deeply committed to preserving our members’ jobs throughout the energy economy. However, workers also need meaningful economic support when this is no longer possible, so that they can secure their next high-quality job or retire with dignity,” **said Tom Conway, President of United Steelworkers (USW) International.** “The American Energy Worker Opportunity Act will aid dislocated coal and oil workers and their families, providing them with educational opportunities, wage supplements, health care benefits and retirement contributions. We applaud Sens. Baldwin, Casey, Whitehouse, Bennet, Duckworth, Smith, and Warren for announcing this crucial legislation.”

“The Utility Workers Union of America commends the leadership of Sens. Brown, Casey, Whitehouse, Baldwin, Bennet, Duckworth, Smith and Warren on the American Energy Worker Opportunity Act. It will offer stability for our members and their families when they need it most,” **said Jim Slevin, President of the Utility Workers Union of America’s National.** “While there’s considerable change taking place across our energy infrastructure, this legislation delivers necessary resources for those working in power plants and eligible industries to transition into new careers. These are the kinds of worker-driven programs we need to support those who have powered America’s communities for generations.”

“Our economy is changing, and as we make the investments needed to fight climate change, America’s working people must be at the top of the priority list. Maintaining well-paid union jobs at the same location is always the first and best choice, and we realize in some cases this will be difficult or take time,” **said Fredrick D. Redmond, Secretary-Treasurer of the AFL-CIO.** “The American Energy Worker Opportunity Act gives workers and their families the support they need during those difficult times, and we urge Congress to pass and fully fund this legislation.”

“As our nation’s energy system transitions, it is absolutely vital that we do not leave workers and communities behind. These are the workers who have powered our nation for generations and we owe it to them to ensure that they have every opportunity to succeed in the clean economy,” **said Jason Walsh, Executive Director of BlueGreen Alliance.** “We thank Sens. Casey, Whitehouse, Baldwin, Bennet, Duckworth, Smith, and Warren for their leadership and look forward to working with them to see this bill through to the finish line.”

“Senators Brown, Casey, and all the sponsors of the American Energy Workers Opportunity Act deserve thanks for elevating the unique needs of coal country and putting forward a strong set of investments that will support workers and families in the transition to a clean economy,” **said Shannon Heyck-Williams, Senior Director of Climate and Energy Policy at the National Wildlife Federation.** “As climate-fueled ‘unnatural disasters’ worsen in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and across the country, our leaders must have the boldness needed to help bring about the safer world we all need, without leaving anyone behind – including those who powered this nation for decades.”

“The transition to a clean energy future means we cannot leave behind those workers who have played such a crucial role in powering our homes and communities for decades,” **said Sara Chieffo, Vice President of Government Affairs at the League of Conservation Voters.** “These workers, their families, and their communities must be supported to take advantage of the millions of new jobs in the clean energy economy that will be created by passage of the Build Back Better Act. We believe this bill helps us achieve this, and thank Senators Brown, Casey, Whitehouse, Baldwin, Bennett, Duckworth and Warren for their leadership on this important issue.”

“For too long communities have faced economic transition without a proper safety net and too many of them have been left behind. This legislation will help ensure that no worker is left behind as we transition to a clean energy economy,” **said Marc Boom, Director of Federal Affairs at NRDC.**

“We can address climate change and support fossil fuel workers, who have helped keep the lights on for generations, simultaneously,” **said Jeremy Richardson, Senior Energy Analyst for the Union of Concerned Scientists.** “The American Energy Workers Transition Act ensures that fossil fuel workers have the resources they need to land on their feet as we shift toward clean energy. Congress must enact a strong set of climate actions in its reconciliation package and it must support workers at the same time. These priorities are both essential.”

An online version of this release is available [here](#).