

A stylized world map composed of a grid of dots in various shades of gray, with several dots highlighted in red. The map is centered behind the title and authors' names.

The BlueGreen Alliance

New Labor-Environment Strategies To Address Climate Change and the Economic Crisis

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- n The BlueGreen Alliance (BGA) is a unique partnership between ten labor unions and four environmental organizations in the United States, uniting over 14 million Americans in pursuit of expanding the number and quality of jobs in the green economy.
- n Through legislative advocacy, grassroots education and mobilization, economic development training, and collaboration with socially responsible businesses, BGA's multi-faceted approach works to tackle America's jobs deficit and advance every sector of a green economy.
- n With proven success in the U.S., and with a spin-off BGA now up and running in Canada, BGA looks to expand its work internationally to help foster similar partnerships abroad, starting with partners in Africa, Asia and Europe.
- n BGA has launched a nationwide Jobs21 campaign to ensure the industries of the future – renewable energy, energy efficiency, transportation, broadband and smart grid – are built in the U.S. to help revitalize the nation's economy and recover the seven million jobs lost during the Great Recession.

Introduction: The BlueGreen Alliance, climate change and the worldwide economic crisis

The BlueGreen Alliance (BGA) is a national, strategic partnership between labor unions and environmental organizations in the United States dedicated to expanding the number and quality of jobs in the green economy. Formed in 2006 by the United Steelworkers (USW), North America's largest manufacturing union, and the Sierra Club, the United States' oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization, the BlueGreen Alliance works to carry out educational and legislative activities in the areas of energy, climate change, fair trade and green chemistry.

The founding of the Alliance followed 40 years of past collaborations between the United Steelworkers and the Sierra Club, beginning with passage of the Clean Air Act and the Occupational Safety and Health Act in the 1970s, and including more recent joint efforts, such as passage of the Steel Recovery Act. However, in 2006, the accelerating pace of globalization and the accompanying seismic social and economic shifts brought the two organizations together in a formal partnership. Both the Steelworkers and Sierra Club realized that meaningful improvement in the economic well-being of the world's population was dependent on the sustainable management of the planet and its resources. In addition, both groups realized that building a strong alliance between organizations like their own was a prerequisite to building successful social movements capable of influencing and shaping crucial policies on international trade, global warming, and broader issues of wealth and poverty. Finally, both the Steelworkers and Sierra Club realized that the best initial organizing approach was to begin with a bilateral partnership that would establish a »leading edge« on key issues – and then expand to other like-minded organizations.

Through successful efforts to knit together the core issues of the labor and environmental movements, since 2006 the USW and the Sierra Club have been joined by nine other labor unions and three additional environmental organizations. Today, the BlueGreen Alliance includes 14 organizations and unites more than 14 million members and supporters in pursuit of good jobs, a clean environment and a green economy.

From telephone linemen to teachers and from steelworkers to construction workers, the BlueGreen Alliance represents workers and industries from every sector of the U.S. economy, and a wide swath of environmental activists working on issues including conservation, climate change, energy, toxics, recycling and public health. Specifically, BGA partners include: Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), Communications Workers of America (CWA), Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA), National Wildlife Federation (NWF), Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Sheet Metal Workers' International Association (SMWIA), Sierra Club, Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), United Auto Workers (UAW), United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), United Steelworkers (USW), Utility Workers Union of America (UWUA). See *Appendix for further description of each partner organization.*

In the context of an accelerating climate crisis, America today has a crushing unemployment problem that, in turn, is creating a crisis of confidence in American political and social institutions. An economic recovery that returns companies to profitability without creating millions of jobs will prevent a restoration of confidence in public institutions and policy solutions designed to create a 21st century clean energy economy.

The BlueGreen Alliance works to pursue strategies for solving America's jobs deficit by supporting an integrated set of policies designed to advance every sector of a green economy – from renewable energy and transportation, to broadband and energy efficiency. These sectors, or »building blocks,« can collectively put millions of people to work, provide strong signals to private investors and companies about emerging markets, and also result in significant reductions in carbon emissions. In adopting this strategy for responding to America's unemployment crisis, BGA contends that the clean energy economy is not just one among many responses that policy makers should try. It is not just a niche strategy to create a small number of environmentally beneficial jobs. Rather, BGA is advancing this approach as the single most effective way to attack unemployment in America and ensure the country's long-term economic competitiveness in the global economy.

Not all growth is equal, nor will the jobs of yesterday create sustainable communities in the future. America needs to be strategic in pursuing an economic recovery strategy that positions us for leadership in the global economy. It is precisely because we have limited resources that we must choose to invest in an economic future that is consistent with the environmental goals of the next generation.

This strategy also recognizes that the core agenda of the BlueGreen Alliance faces opposition and that we need to fight back aggressively and effectively. Following the election of Barack Obama as President of the United States, BGA was preparing for the passage of comprehensive climate and energy legislation and the Employee Free Choice Act. Today, with a dramatic change in leadership in Washington and in statehouses across the country, we are working with labor and environmental partners – as well as socially responsible businesses – to defend the legal authority of EPA to regulate greenhouse gases, and to fight the continued decline of union density in the workforce and attacks on workers' ability to organize. And we are also calling for a long-term job creation plan with clean energy investments as a centerpiece.

1. Joining Forces for a Common Agenda

Together, BGA partners promote programs and policies aimed at expanding the green global economy. BGA works to strengthen alliances by teaming with partners to conduct joint grassroots education with environmental and labor constituencies; hold conferences, rallies and campaigns; create and publish reports; and lobby to pass important legislation. In this way, union members and environmentalists unite around common goals such as passage of environmental, energy and economic policies that will move the U.S. toward a clean energy economy and position it to be a leader in the global clean energy economy. BGA works to change the political calculus around key legislation by building broad coalitions on the ground between labor, environmental and business organizations with a commitment to environmental sustainability. BGA also works to expand and recast dialog and promote cooperative engagement between those that have a direct self-interest in a clean energy economy.

»This uncommon partnership is driven by our common goal to realize that creating good jobs and protecting the

environment are inextricably linked,« Carl Pope, executive director of Sierra Club.

The BlueGreen Alliance Board of Directors, composed of a principal leader from each member organization, collectively makes decisions on issues and initiatives. BGA's strategic focus ranges from large-scale, proactive campaigns, such as the effort to pass comprehensive climate legislation, to defending fundamental labor and environmental rights, such as the current initiatives to back EPA's authority to regulate pollution and greenhouse gases and mobilize environmentalists to support workers' rights to organize. These campaigns unite all BGA member groups. In addition, BGA also runs issue and sector-specific campaigns that unite two or more of the partners.

»Environmentalists and labor groups are working together, standing side-by-side, and presenting a path forward for strong action on global warming that will repower our economy and protect our planet's future,« Frances Beinecke, President of the Natural Resources Defense Council.

On the ground, BGA trains working people, environmentalists and other partners to build alliances and win on issues that will help create good, sustainable green jobs. BGA offers educational programs and resources customized to meet the specific needs of partner organizations and unions. Educational programs include intensive, multi-day training sessions to help partners and allies quickly expand their educational audience to achieve maximum impact. These sessions are often a critical prelude to joint action.

2. Special Projects and Initiatives

The BGA advocates, educates and mobilizes on issues ranging from energy and climate change to transportation, workers' rights and green chemistry. Additionally, the BlueGreen Alliance Foundation (BGAF), a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that conducts research and educates the public and media about solutions to environmental challenges that create economic opportunities for the American people, specifically with regard to worker training and domestic supply chain development. Special programs and initiatives include:

Good Jobs, Green Jobs National Conference

The fourth annual *Good Jobs, Green Jobs National Conference*, which is hosted by the BlueGreen Alliance Foundation and which took place in Washington, D.C. in February 2011, brought together close to 3,000 labor, environmental, business, academic, political and social justice leaders to share research and ideas for achieving a refashioned, green economy. The conference is attended each year by green economy leaders at the highest levels – elected union officials and environmental champions, members of congress, key administration officials, top executives from emerging green industries from established industries in transition, leaders from the nonprofit and foundation world, investors, thought leaders and academics – all united in a shared vision of a new green economy that creates good jobs and solves the environmental crisis.

Grassroots Mobilization and Education

■n JOBS21!

Jobs21! is a nine-state campaign – launched in Minnesota, Michigan, Wisconsin, Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and California – that will bring together union members and environmentalists to promote the creation of good jobs through investments in the clean energy economy, including renewable energy, manufacturing, construction, transportation, and high-speed Internet. In addition, the campaign will focus on the importance of environmental regulations to reduce emissions and create jobs and protecting the health and safety of workers and communities. It is spearheaded by a former Congressman and the former Minnesota State Senate Assistant Majority Leader.

■n Labor Climate Project

The Labor Climate Project (LCP), launched in 2008 in partnership with former Vice President Al Gore's Alliance for Climate Protection (ACP), utilizes union members as messengers to educate fellow blue-collar workers about the urgency and solvability of global warming and how its solutions can revitalize the economy and create good, union jobs. The LCP has provided direct education to rank-and-file union members, primarily with the USW, about the links between global warming solutions and job creation in their industries. The LCP reaches more than 250 union organizations in key target states every year

through union executive board meetings, conferences, conventions, training schools, leadership programs and other special events. BGA directly reaches hundreds of thousands of union members through field organizers and indirectly through earned media efforts.

Economic Development Programs

■n Clean Energy Manufacturing Center

The BlueGreen Alliance Foundation's Clean Energy Manufacturing Center (CEMC) focuses on job creation opportunities in the manufacturing supply chains for emerging clean energy industries. The center assists public officials looking to develop clean energy strategies for their communities as well as small manufacturers looking to participate in supply chains in the growing wind power and solar energy sectors. The recipient of three-year support from the US Department of Commerce, CEMC is now partnering with the Global Wind Network to provide large wind companies with information about small suppliers – and to provide technical assistance to those small companies on how to break into the fast-growing wind market.

■n GreenPOWER

In 2009, the the BlueGreen Alliance Foundation led a Minnesota coalition in the development of the GreenPOWER (Minnesota Green Partnerships of Worker and Employer Resources) jobs training program which united the state's employers, labor unions, educators and services providers in a program to train manufacturing workers to bring lean manufacturing techniques to the workplace and to fill the jobs being created in the green economy. Training is designed to achieve two goals: increase workers' skills to the level needed to find employment and teach workers green manufacturing techniques and processes to make them more employable in the green economy.

3. International Partnerships

The BlueGreen Alliance has become a recognized leader in reconciling differences between labor and environmental NGOs in the U.S. With this proven success on the national level, BGA looks to extend its work to help unite international labor and environmental organizations around the urgent need for climate change solutions that create millions of good green jobs globally.

One of the fundamental challenges to democracy is the creation of sustainable models of economic development that raise standards of living while preserving the natural environment for future generations. This challenge is magnified as global society confronts three interrelated crises: chronic unemployment, climate change and dependence on imported sources of energy. The integrated solution to these problems – transformation of the global economy to clean energy – has the potential to create millions of green jobs, diminish the climate crisis, promote long-term economic growth, and provide an alternative economic development model for countries throughout the world. As we have witnessed in the United States however, this transformation will not be realized without the engagement and buy-in from both labor unions and environmental groups, and that creating strong alliances between these movements can win popular support for smart energy policies.

Establishing similar labor-environmental alliances in other parts of the world can play a significant role in bringing together the right stakeholders to develop country-specific plans of action towards the realization of the green economy. Needless to say, these alliances also help build the base of support for coalesced, international action on climate change.

BGA will proactively engage international organizations looking to build green jobs coalitions and create alliances with unions and organizations around the world through the following initiatives:

- Work with in-country partner labor unions and environmental groups to build organizing capacity and encourage engagement around the economic benefits of climate change solutions;
- Attend and speak at conferences and events such as national and regional labor conventions and environmental conferences;
- Work with international allies to convene strategic joint discussions, roundtable meetings and conferences on green jobs and the potential for labor-environmental collaboration across a broad range of issues affecting the global environment and economy; and
- Provide support, technical assistance and research to prepare reports on the economic benefits of climate

change solutions and undertake research and analysis internationally, focusing on potential impacts of climate change solutions to global trade and job creation.

To date, BGA has successfully helped establish its sister organization, Blue Green Alliance Canada (BGA Canada). BGA Canada is a partnership between the United Steelworkers, Canada's largest industrial union, and Environmental Defense, one of Canada's most prominent environmental organizations.

The BlueGreen Alliance is also a longstanding contributor to the UN's climate negotiations, hosting workshops and events in Montreal in 2005, Bali in 2007, Poznan in 2008, Copenhagen in 2009 and Cancun in 2010. BGA is working actively with its partners to build an understanding for and support of a global climate treaty.

4. Winning the Future

The time for arguing about climate change is past. The world economy and the global environment are both at a crossroads, with a choice between responsibly addressing global warming now, or facing its severe consequences later. The U.S. and the world have an opportunity to transition to clean, renewable sources of energy, reducing the emissions that cause global warming while also creating and maintaining good jobs for millions of working men and women. The BlueGreen Alliance is dedicated to pushing the U.S. to take the path toward robust job creation and a clean, sustainable environment, and to leading an international push for action to solve the climate crisis and the challenge of ubiquitous toxics in the environment.

To seize this historic moment and the dramatic growth in interest from unions, environmental NGOs, and political parties in other countries in BGA's mission, the BGA staff and partners are executing a comprehensive international outreach program, to support labor and environmental collaboration in targeted countries where we have felt such joint efforts would 1) promote the importance of a successful international climate change treaty; 2) promote understanding of the goals of US labor and environmental organizations; and 3) facilitate the growth of green jobs worldwide through investments in clean energy. In 2011, we will continue to build this work with partners in Africa, Asia and Europe.



BGA's plan for winning the future is one that will not only call for transitioning to clean, renewable sources of energy, but will also call for the revitalization of the American middle class while rejecting policies that allow corporations to chase the cheapest labor and lowest environmental standards around the world, only to create the greatest wealth for the fewest amount of people. The BGA vision identifies the clean energy technologies of the 21st century as the highest form of innovation. The BGA vision will have the 14 million members of its partners' organizations working with domestic and international partners, speaking with a common voice about the BGA's common goals. The BGA vision sees investments in green technologies as the best and fastest path toward hope and a better life for millions of people across the globe.

Appendix: BlueGreen Alliance Partners

■ Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU)

The Amalgamated Transit Union is the largest labor organization representing transit workers in the United States and Canada. The ATU has over 190,000 members in 264 local unions spread across 44 states and nine provinces. Composed of bus drivers, light rail operators, maintenance and clerical personnel and other transit and municipal employees, the ATU works to promote transit issues and fights for the interests of its hard-working members.

■ American Federation of Teachers (AFT)

The American Federation of Teachers is an affiliated international union of the AFL-CIO that represents the economic, social and professional interests of classroom teachers. The AFT has more than 3,000 local affiliates nationwide, 43 state affiliates, and more than 1.4 million members.

■ Communications Workers of America (CWA)

The Communications Workers of America is one of America's fastest growing unions and represents 700,000 workers in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico. As the union for the Information Age, CWA members work in communications, media, airlines, manufacturing and public service.

■ Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA)

The Laborers' International Union of North America is the most progressive, aggressive and fastest-growing union of construction workers, and one of the most diverse and effective unions representing public service employees. Representing 500,000 workers, LIUNA is united through collective bargaining agreements which help earn family-supporting pay, good benefits and the opportunity for advancement and better lives.

■ National Wildlife Federation (NWF)

The National Wildlife Federation is America's largest conservation organization and works with more than 4 million members, partners and supports in communities across the country to protect and restore wildlife habitat, confront global warming and connect with nature.

■ Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)

The Natural Resources Defense Council is America's most effective environmental action organization. NRDC uses law, science and the support of 1.2 million members and online activists to protect the planet's wildlife and wild places and to ensure a safe and healthy environment for all living things.

■ Service Employees International Union (SEIU)

The Service Employees International Union is the largest union of health care and property service workers and second-largest public employee union. With 2 million members in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico, SEIU is the fastest-growing union in the Americas.

■ Sheet Metal Workers' International Association (SMWIA)

The Sheet Metal Workers' International Association represents over 150,000 skilled men and women employed in the construction, manufacturing, service, railroad and shipyard industries throughout the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico. SMWIA strives to establish and maintain desirable working conditions for its members through their employers.

■ Sierra Club

The Sierra Club is America's oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, whose members work together to protect communities and the planet. With 1.3 million members and supporters, the Sierra Club is working to achieve a safe and healthy community in which to live; smart energy solutions to combat global warming; and an enduring legacy for America's wild places.

■ Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS)

The Union of Concerned Scientists is the leading science-based nonprofit working for a healthy environment and a safer world. With more than 250,000 citizen and scientists members, UCS combines independent scientific research and citizen action to develop innovative, practical solutions and to secure responsible changes in government policy, corporate practices, and consumer choices.


■n United Auto Workers (UAW)

The International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America is one of the largest and most diverse unions in North America, with members in virtually every sector of the economy. The UAW has more than 390,000 active members and more than 600,000 retired members in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico.

■n United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW)

The United Food and Commercial Workers International Union represents 1.3 million members who work in a range of industries, with the majority working in retail food, meatpacking and poultry, food processing and manufacturing, and retail stores. The UFCW is North America's neighborhood union, and with 40 percent of UFCW members under the age of 30, the largest union of young workers.

■n United Steelworkers (USW)

The United Steelworkers is the largest industrial union in North America with 850,000 active members working in almost every industrial sector in the North American economy. Together, active and retired members throughout the United States and Canada number 1.2 million and work together to improve jobs; to build a better future for families; and to promote fairness, justice and equality both on the job and in our societies.

■n Utility Workers Union of America (UWUA)

The Utility Workers Union of America, AFL-CIO is one of the most successful and progressive unions in all of the labor movement. UWUA has over 50,000 members working in the electric, gas, water, and nuclear industries across the United States.



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