# CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS

## EDUCATING THE CLEAN ENERGY WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

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KATE GORDON: I am Kate Gordon. I run the energy team here at the Center for American Progress, formerly the co-director of the Apollo Alliance. And you will hear many times throughout this conference that people were formerly at the Apollo Alliance. And I want to just acknowledge Apollo's role in the green jobs movement of sort of seeding people all over the place.

Jeff Rickert, who at least was here before, now at the Green Jobs Center at the AFL, formerly director of the Apollo Alliance. Van Jones, Joel Rogers, some of the cofounders with Bracken Hendricks and Bob Borosage earlier here today. We have just sort of – our tentacles are everywhere. So thanks to Apollo again on this conference and to all of you who are here and who have made it this far. And I hope that the coffee and the sugar are now coursing through your veins and you are excited about this panel.

You know, we have heard a lot today – and before I introduce the panel, I wanted to say a couple of words about, you know, what does economy look like in 2020? What we have heard is a lot of different visions, but I really think some of the themes have been, you know, this is about investment. It is about investment over a broad range of areas. It is about comprehensive investment and not just innovation, not just invention, not just installation, not just manufacturing, but a range of those things across the value chain.

We have heard about the need for a vision on the clean energy economy. And I think that has been a theme that we have heard over and over again. It is something that though parts of the vision are being carried out as you heard, in parts of the government, we don't have that comprehensive vision. We have heard that there is a problem to be solved. We have heard that this isn't just sort of the next interesting thing we could be paying attention to, but that there is a global warming crisis and there is an economic crisis and a national security crisis. And, you know, we have heard about some unemployment numbers. I thought Leo Hindery's numbers were really interesting.

And one thing I found out while we were doing this paperwork we just released on China, Germany and Spain was that Spain calculates their unemployment rate the way that Leo calculates are. That is, that Spain's is very, very high, but they count all of the people that we don't count here. So all was worth seeing how those things are brought up. We have a crisis.

You know, women are now a greater percent of the workforce than men. And there is a crisis among unemployed men, although you wouldn't know it from this panel. It is, in fact, true – (chuckles) – that women are a greater share of the workforce and men are increasingly unemployed. And we don't have much of the export economy in clean energy. So there are a lot of issues here.

And this panel is really devoted to the question of not just what does the economy look like in 2020, but what kind of workforce do we have to have in 2020, 2030, 2050 to achieve the vision of the clean energy economy we have been hearing about all day? Are we on the right path to getting to that workforce? How do we design those systems? How do we think about current workers, unemployed workers, workers with skills that apply to, perhaps, earlier industries or economies, new workers coming up now. What are they going to do?

I was talking over one of the breaks with Eric Roston, a friend of mine in the back, and I was joking, you know, when I was doing the research on Germany, you know, Germany at age 12 sort of decides what you are going to do when you grow up. You know, so the German system puts people into manufacturing. You know, we wonder why Germany has such a strong manufacturing base. Well, part of it is because they have a lot of manufacturing workers who they train from an early age. Do we want that for this country?

You know, Eric was saying – when I said that, he was saying maybe we should do like what you do for the Olympics, right? You take people the minute they show promise in something and you whisk them away to a camp in Colorado and you start training them for doing that the rest of your life. You know, is that where we want to go? I mean, will we have the necessary workforce to get to the place that we have all said we want to get?

That is really what this panel is about. And I hope it will be a great conversation. I know it will. And we will leave time for questions. I am really going to just ask a couple of questions of the panel and then sort of have them riff and then open it up to you all because I know you all have good insight. First, really quickly, introductions.

I think all the way to my right, Louis Soares, who is here at the Center for American Progress. He is the head of a project that I always forget the full name of, the director of our postsecondary education program, so very relevant. Has a lot of experience on the ground in Rhode Island working both as the director of business development for the Economic Development Corporation of Rhode Island and workforce training experience in Rhode Island as well, so state-based experience, which is incredibly important because so much of this happens at the state level.

Joel Rogers, next in line, cofounder of the Apollo Alliance, as I said, and essentially, many of the progressive movements out there in the country that people think are cool, Joel's name comes up in some way, Mayors Innovation Project, Center for State Innovation, the EARN Network for you zombie economist geeks out there – Joel is another one – Emerald Cities Collaborative, so really behind a lot of these great movements. Joel is at the Center on Wisconsin Strategy, or COWS, in Wisconsin and also my former boss. So I have to ask him softball questions, make him look good.

Andy Levin, next in line, deputy director of the department of energy, labor and economic growth in Michigan. They combined all of their departments, which we think is cool here in the energy world. The architect really of that state's "No Worker Left Behind" project, which is really an impressive program I am sure you will hear more about. Was in D.C. for a long time before that, I think at the Department of Labor and the AFL, and I have to note is having a very big day, because his father just became the chair of the Ways and Means

Committee, so we are proud of him and his family. And he is a little stunned, I think. (Chuckles.)

And finally, Van Jones, who we are thrilled at CAP to welcome back as a senior fellow here at the Center for American Progress to run what we are calling the "Green Opportunity Initiative," which is really a project focused on how to make sure that the green economy we are all talking about is actually open and accessible and creates opportunities and broadly shared prosperity across workers and across communities. Van, former advisor on green jobs to the Council on Environmental Quality, and, as many of you know, founded the organization of Green for All, wrote a seminal book, "Green Collar Economy." And again, another early Apollo participant.

So great panel, really wonderful people, all friends. And I am thrilled to be up here talking with them. And the first question, I think, just goes back to what I said in the introductory remarks, which is, you know, maybe starting at the end there with Louis. What does the workforce look like in 2020, 2030, you know, into the future if we want to achieve this sort of competitive, robust, you know, set of opportunities and economic growth that we have talked about today?

LOUIS SOARES: Sure. So first of all, thanks for having me. And thanks for putting me on a panel with so many really smart people. You know, I would say this about the workforce in 2020. The evidence is clear that it is a good bet for – the U.S. is furthest behind in credential attainment actually at the sub-baccalaureate level. So we are further – we are actually closer to international, you know, the international top of the pile at the baccalaureate level of education.

And so a lot of the work around the green jobs economy is, in fact, at the sub-baccalaureate level. And so I think it is a good bet in terms of what I would call an unconscious national human capital strategy to borrow from the industrial policy metaphors that we heard earlier. You know, there is a robustness to a lot of the activity that is happening around this topic at that level that it both creates economic opportunities for folks that are, you know, at risk of falling out of the middle class or trying to get into the middle class and it also makes good sense because that is where we are falling behind.

The other thing is that regardless of education level, it is clear that the skills trends are trending towards folks that have a certain amount of technical knowledge that they are able to be creative with. So, you know, if you think of – if it is, you know, a windmill technician, it is a windmill technician that is working with smart infrastructure that actually knows how to creatively solve a problem that is not written for them in the rulebook of how all that fits together.

And so for the U.S. 20 years from now, we need to get better through all these programs at creating both folks at, I mean, I would argue, a minimum of one year of postsecondary education or an equivalent, but also has the ability to problem solve in creative ways around that technology base. This is, you know, the metaphor that is most often used is your auto mechanic who, you know, the computer says there is nothing wrong with your car, but it keeps making a noise. Your auto mechanic takes it around the block for a drive and comes back and knows what the problem is. And you ask him how he knows that and it is well, he learned a bunch of stuff, then he has a bunch of experience and somehow he comes up with a solution for that problem. And it is definitely a place where we have a deficit in the U.S.

MR. : Can you give me the name of your auto mechanic?

MR. SOARES: The skill sets that we are developing through these levels have to take on that quality. It is what the market is valuing as a premium in the labor market. And it is also where national competitiveness comes from, I believe, at all levels of formal education. But those two areas are where we need to go, that sub-baccalaureate richness in how we consciously educate more people at that level and then also, this qualitative notion of what those people are able to do at that level of the labor force.

MS. GORDON: Thanks. Joel, you want to just riff off that?

JOEL ROGERS: Yeah, sure. Well, let's talk about what it will look like in 2030. It is going to look older than what we have now. A lot of the people in the economy now are still going to be around in 2030, only they are going to be a little bit older. It is going to be darker than what we have now.

Most of the new labor market entrants are going to be non-white – the new labor market entrants in the next 20 years. And I hope it is going to be better-educated. But I certainly agree with Leo and other people that spoke earlier that human capital alone is certainly not going to solve the competitiveness problem or is the key thing to making the transition to the green economy.

Yeah, I would hope that it would be more into problem solving and more respectful as a system of the fact that learning is enchanted by use and that we ought to learn how to actually be able to do some stuff other than deconstruct fairy tales or whatever it is that most people learn now in college or do finance, you know, new finance innovation.

It would ideally – let's talk about ideally – it would be ideally a lot more productive than our current economy. And it is going to have to be because it is going to have a huge number of old people sitting around not working – about 80 million rather than 40 million now who are there and they are going to be dragging down the health-care costs and making other claims in terms of social services. So we would like it to be really productive.

And to do that, you would need to have integration between the different things we were talking about all day long – not just the human capital end of the equation – more on that in a moment – but also the finance and the establishment of markets in this and other areas of achieved or attempted national gain.

On the human capital end, ideally, ideally would be a system of the sort that we have talked about trying to build in America for the last – I don't know – 30, 40 years now, certainly since "A Nation at Risk" came out, whenever that was, which would be a system in which you had some better, clearer national standards on performance that were tested and you had a system of national credentials of different sorts done on an occupational basis presumably.

You had a feeder system, which did not end at either the sub-baccalaureate level or the baccalaureate level, but was one which took people basically from infancy through dotage to give them the possibilities of learning and reentering educational training of different sorts at any point. That at its peak moments of intense engagement with individuals, it would be seamless, integrated, tested, but not in an insane way, leading to credentials with demand-driven – (inaudible). It would be informed by and feed into a more orderly labor market system, a variety of things, none of which currently exist in the U.S. So that would be the ideal.

MS. GORDON: That's okay. We have 10 years under my theory.

MR. ROGERS: So that would be the ideal, I think.

MS. GORDON: Great. Thank you. Thank you, Joel. Andy, your thought coming from a state that is facing these problems sort of in a more stark way than a lot of other states?

ANDY LEVIN: Yes, well, thank you, Kate. It is great to be here. I would say – I would start from the fact that this clean-tech workforce that you are envisioning in 2030 or whatever, we are not talking about one industry. We are talking about many industries that cut across most sectors of the economy. And the jobs, we are not talking about one or two occupations. You are talking about an astounding in a happy, happily, very vast array of different kind of jobs that should provide opportunities to a lot of different kind of people.

So really the question is what is the workforce system we need to help build this clean-tech economy? And it is very different than the workforce system we have now. It is very, very different than the workforce system we have now. And Joel has hit on some of it. But what I would say is that, you know, Joel and I see each other a lot at things like this and he sort of talks from 30,000 feet and I am down there struggling, you know, in Michigan to try to move the ball one inch.

So I am focused on sort of what we can do now. The Workforce Investment Act, our fundamental statute, if our workforce system is up for reauthorization, the temporary assistance for needy families is up for reauthorization soon. The Trade Adjustment Assistance Act was given new life, but only until the end of this year. And so that is up. And we need – and there is no reason we shouldn't undertake a fundamental overhaul of our workforce system to bring it into the 21st century.

So we can talk about this more if you are interested, but just a few fundamental pieces of it. Number one, we have to have much greater emphasis on training and longer-term training and income support for people while they are on training. Our unemployment insurance system is a mess. It only covers 30 or 40 percent of people who lose their jobs. And then there is really – it doesn't provide people systematically any support if they are willing to take a chance on themselves and go out and get the training they need to do these kind of jobs. And so we need that to be at the center of it.

We need to integrate adult education and bring it into the mainstream of economic policy in this country. I am talking about the first couple rungs on the ladder. I am talking about in Michigan – and we are not sadly unique or worse than other places in this regard – one-third of our working-age population lacks the basic skills necessary to get a good job if they lose their job or to train at the associate's level for any job. That encompasses several sectors/groups of people.

That is true everywhere. Two-thirds of all people who enter community colleges need remediation. But our remedial courses aren't effective, on the other hand, we generally acknowledge. So we really need to integrate basic adult education and change in a lot of ways that we can talk about if people are interested.

Thirdly, we have to integrate economic and workforce development and make this a demand-driven outfit where we are working with employers, industries, sectors to train people for the jobs that are there, that are coming. And this is obviously particularly irrelevant to the clean-tech jobs, but it is what we need across the system. And we need it all to be data driven.

You know, Joel keeps talking about something that is measured and tested and so forth. And, you know, the federal government really needs to say to the states really to impose a requirement that we have what people call a P-20 data system, a preschool to graduate school to workforce data system that tracks people longitudinally so we know what works and what doesn't work. And so we can have really a system of lifelong learning.

And so unfortunately, there is a lot of talk about sort of tweaking the Workforce Investment Act and doing small fixes when we really need something much bigger that is adequate for the task that you are putting before us today. And then in addition to that, really the work fundamentally is on the ground and it is not very sexy. It is very hard. And I am just going to give you an example.

It is sector based and it is not green jobs. That is not a sector. Even solar is not a sector. In Michigan, in one region of Michigan, we are very big in the solar base materials industry. Like, you know, how glass is made out of sand? So solar film and solar panels made out of really fancy human-made sand called polycrystalline silicate something – hyper-pure polycrystalline silicate. There you go.

You know, it is made like in factories, so we are big in this. So it is that level – okay, now you are talking about a level that you could talk about workforce training. And, in fact, there is a community college in the Saginaw area where this is based. We have both an associate's program and an accelerated program for unemployed workers for 16 weeks full-time that trains people to get these jobs.

And, you know, we are talking $40-45,000 a year with benefits anyway to start, some of it unionized, some of it not. And 95 percent of the people who have come out have been placed with Dow Chemical, Dow Corning, Hemlock Semiconductor, Evergreen Solar, the companies we have there. One other example I would give is – and this is Michigan's biggest sort of unique sort of – what do you economists call it? Local advantage or, you know, you should do what you are good at in econ 101, whatever.

MR. : Comparative advantage.

MR. LEVIN: Comparative advantage. Competitive advantage. So we have really for several years had a big strategy to become the advanced energy storage capital of the world. We are talking about batteries for hybrid and electric cars, but also for the military, which is going fully electric and for storing energy for intermittent power sources – solar, wind and so forth.

So Michigan got – when the Department of Energy put out $2 billion of grants for advanced battery work on various parts of the value chain, Michigan got $1.3 billion of that. Okay, that wasn't political and it wasn't like the big three got all the money. That was 12 different projects with a wide array of, you know, startups and genius Ann Arbor professors who have a company, two of the big three, Dow Chemical with South Korean companies working here working in this space.

And so we are creating a sector alliance in advanced batteries for production workers. But we are also training laid-off and incumbent auto engineers to become hybrid and full-electric vehicle engineers. And we call it the Green Mobility Academy. We put 200 people through it. We got all the auto companies involved, all the – this is what I am talking about not sexy. I mean, the companies don't often want to come. This isn't about this quarter's profit. You know, it is like, oh, this is long term.

They have to pay attention to a long-term issue, training. And then the universities all come, but they just want to do it the way they already do it. And what do you mean? I have to – they have to get a degree at my university. They can't get a degree at Van's. And the idea that we would like both put in our stronger courses and come up with something that the companies get to pick as a smorgasbord or something – I mean, which is what we ended up doing. That is a big challenge for them.

But we put it out to bid. It is all very competitive. And Michigan Tech and Wayne State University are the leading universities. We put 200 people through the first wave, 200 people in the second wave of this training for engineers. And the auto companies are now trying to reserve spots and say they will pay for people because they want to have the people who graduate.

So I think that to get there, we have to redesign the system fundamentally, Kate, but also do a lot of sort of local work with companies, universities, community colleges, especially, and workforce agencies in a very concrete way. Train people for the jobs as they are coming and not in some abstract sense about green jobs up in the air.

MS. GORDON: That is great. I am going to follow up on that. But I want to hear Van on this 2020 issue or beyond.

VAN JONES: Well, first of all, it is good to be back. It is good to see so many colleagues. I see some of the green grassroots out in California, see some of the big funders, entrepreneurs. So this is kind of a little bit of a homecoming for me to get a chance to talk about this stuff.

Before I talk about where we are going, I do think it is important, especially being here with Joel, to kind of just take a step back and look at where we are. In 2004, when the Apollo Alliance was first pulled together, same year that the Cummings Foundation funded the Ella Baker Center to do this thing called Dreaming Oakland, which eventually became some urban green jobs.

There was a question. And the question was is there going to be a green economy? Will there be a clean energy economy? At that time, just 4 or 5 years ago, 6 years ago, the question was will there be a transition at all? Well, the answer to that question is yes. We can affirmatively say there will be a green economy. There will be a clean energy economy. But now there are three questions that we are being forced to grapple with.

First of all, will it be big enough and strong enough to avoid an eco-apocalypse anyway? And there is a robust policy conversation about that. It is called Copenhagen. It is called cap-and-trade. How it all shakes out, we don't know. But there is a policy conversation about that big question. Yes, you see the motion. We have got $80 billion. You see China rushing ahead. Yes, there is going to be a green economy, but will it be enough to avoid a catastrophe? That is the question now.

Secondly, will America get our fair share of the green jobs that are created in the green economy globally? What proportion will be here? What proportion will be in Asia and overseas? But there is a big robust policy discussion about that. We have the wind companies and solars saying they want a renewable energy standard to make sure we are producing the jobs here. We have a big discussion now about trade policy with China, a big robust discussion on that question as well.

The third question, though, which is what I want to talk about, yes, we will have a green economy. A big robust policy discussion about how big it will be, how strong it will be, how fast it will get here. A big robust policy discussion emerging now about will we get our fair share? But the third question is will all Americans have a fair shot at America's fair share? And there is not yet a big robust policy discussion about that. Will all Americans have a fair shot at America's fair share?

And I think that is going to be a critical piece of the puzzle here that actually helps to solve the rest of it. If all Americans are likely to get a fair shot at America's fair share, then we are going to be a lot more aggressive about getting the renewable energy standard in place. We are going to be a lot more aggressive about getting smart climate policy in place because everybody is going to see that they have got a dog in this race.

This is a big issue. And I want to just hit some numbers, which we haven't hit hard. I just want to hit them. They are uncomfortable numbers, but they are important numbers. If we imagine that the green workforce is going to be trained, skilled, prepared, hopefully well-organized, then what we are imagining is a greening of the labor movement as well. And right now we still have not achieved what we would like to achieve as a country within our labor movement.

Just for instance, of the construction workforce, women are only 10 percent. In terms of basic construction craft – again, a painful number – women are still only 2.7 percent. African-Americans make up 12 percent of the 2007 workforce. Only 6.5 percent of workers in the basic construction crafts. You would expect to see more than that by now given the amount of work that has been put in. In this Hispanic community, Latino community, actually overrepresented thankfully within the trades, but disproportionately in the lower end, lower skilled, lower quality work.

So – (inaudible) – imagines that if our skilled workers, our best-trained, best-organized workers are going to help build the green economy, we may wind up building a green economy that Dr. King would not be proud of. We may wind up building a green economy that the heroes and the sheroes of the last century would not be proud of. And that will be our fault.

One of the things we have to remember is we are actually building something new here. So if we fail to get across the finish line on equity and inclusion and fairness, we can't blame our grandparents. We can't say well, you know, those people in the South – we can't do what we like to do and blame somebody else. It is actually – it is up to us to sort this stuff out.

Now, the good news is there is actually some forward motion, some positive progress that can be reported – not the least of which is Secretary Hilda Solis' great work by taking the Green Jobs Act that so many of us here worked on and dreamed up and loved and hugged and, you know, got across the finish line with Speaker Pelosi's great work on the House side. But in the original Green Jobs Act, 2007, which by the way, George W. Bush signed into law. People forget that. Bipartisanship is kind of the rage we started there actually.

In the original Green Jobs Act, there was something called Pathways out of Poverty. The idea was that we would actually – the very first time we ever codified the term, green jobs, in federal law was the Green Jobs Act. And there was a piece of that that was called Pathways out of Poverty. From the very beginning, this notion that we wanted to make sure that the rungs of opportunity on that green ladder went all the way down to the people who most needed new hope and new help was written right into the law.

But unfortunately, in 2008, it wasn't funded, so in 2009, the Obama administration stepped in and put half a billion dollars on the table for the Green Jobs Act, took out the requirement for – I forgot what the percentage was – that percentage requirement for Pathways out of Poverty knowing that Hilda Solis would be able to – without being constrained, be able to establish a good program that would actually be effective, which we just heard about.

That is good. That means right out of the box, the first funded green jobs effort actually takes us into account because of her leadership. But we still don't have the policy tools. And so I want to just suggest a few and then we will make it a part of the conversation going forward. There is an organization called Green for All, which I am happy to still be associated with, that has put forward and is putting forward the idea of green construction careers demonstration projects. And this goes to your point, Andy, about what can we do right away.

In the upcoming jobs bill, we hope to see a green construction careers demonstration project that will let targeted efforts go forward to target communities, to target disadvantaged workers and give them that extra support to become a part of this green economy. One of the, I think, most important things that we can say about that stuff is that it is already working at the local level. It isn't something that somebody is dreaming up in Washington, D.C. saying hey, let's go do it.

You know, we have folks in Los Angeles, Oakland and other places that already are doing some of this stuff. In Los Angeles with similar programs, we have targeted workers being employed for 35 percent of all the worker hours on some key construction projects. The Port of Oakland, 31 percent of all worker hours, a similar program has created opportunities for 900,000 hours of work at the port. So we have got some wisdom at the grassroots. What we don't have yet is a robust federal policy suite of tools to get the wisdom and the smarts that is happening at the local level all across the country.

The last thing I just want to throw out there more as a slogan than as an actual proposal is it might be helpful to have either green opportunity zones or green enterprise zones or green empowerment zones or some kind of program that would help employers, give employers tax relief and incentives and support to hire people who have disadvantages – who come from disadvantaged backgrounds or to locate in communities like Appalachia, like Watts (ph), like Oakland, like Newark, New Jersey, that need that kind of extra support.

But what I want to argue is that if we don't start having the robust policy conversation right now about inclusion and about equal opportunity in the green economy, I think not only is that a policy failure, it is likely to lead to a political failure, which will ensure an economic and ecological failure.

MS. GORDON: Thanks, Van. That is great. So many great ideas came out of this panel. And we are a little, I realize, behind where we wanted to be. So what I am going to do is sort of ask a question and then I am going to open it up pretty soon to the audience because I know you all have good questions, too.

One thing that you all talked about in varying ways was really – and I think especially sort of Andy on the sector side and Van, in a way, on the worker side – is this sort of – this notion of building off of – sort of having an intentional strategy. And Andy, you talked a lot about building off of what your advantages are, the competitive advantage point. So, you know, you decided Michigan was going to be a leader in batteries and then worked toward that and then got a whole bunch of money from the Recovery Act to do it, which is great.

And I was talking at the very beginning about sort of deciding Germany's efforts and workforce deciding where people are going to work, so that you are not falling into this, you know, training for jobs that don't exist. You are sort of intentionally creating the jobs in a sector. You are intentionally training people. That is really anathema to a lot of Americans. I mean, that is essentially when John Podesta this morning said "Picking a Winner" was a provocative name for this conference. What he was saying was, you know, we don't do that. We don't pick winners. We don't pick batteries as our technology. We don't pick communities as the people who are going to be doing the work.

So are we going toward – I mean, are you guys saying – and sort of anyone can jump on this, but should we be doing more of that? I mean, should we be saying what is – you know, as America or as our communities or as our states, what are our advantages now? Taking a harder, more data-driven look at that and then saying basically, you know, what should we be investing in? Not just clean energy, green jobs, but should we be more intentional and more sort of sector driven and kind of narrower in scope? And does that work in sort of the American ideal of entrepreneurship and innovation? Joel, you want to – you are looking at me like you want to say something.

MR. ROGERS: Yeah, is that a rhetorical question? (Laughter.)

MS. GORDON: No, it is a real question.

MR. ROGERS: Yes, it would really be good if communities across this great land, people actually knew what they were talking about and that you substituted data for anecdote – the tyranny of the anecdote – and that economic development in cities and in regions and in states and in mega regions composed of several states was driven by actual data and some sort of inter-subjectively verifiable means of seeing if it was true. Yeah, that would be good.

And here Michigan is exemplary. Michigan actually mapped their industrial capacities in different regions and then mapped what the employers would need to satisfy growth in those areas and along with Washington, I think, is probably the leading state to have done that carefully on the green space. That should be done all over. And the federal government should help that a lot more.

Otherwise, you will have local economic development where there is a lot of the innovation going on behave the way it traditionally has, which is insane competition between sub-jurisdictions of different sorts, property tax and other competition, very little clear data on what people are doing. And you will have, you know, the creative class this day and something else the next. And people will just go from one rumor of how you produce value to the next. So yeah, I am all for data and actually finding out what you are talking about, absolutely.

MS. GORDON: And maybe to add to the rhetorical nature of my question –

MR. ROGERS: And yes, we should be more intentional.

MS. ROGERS: Right, right. To add to it, you know, and also based on things people have said, how much of that has to be local because just by definition, it is going to have to happen locally? What can we do nationally? And what can we do nationally to support the local efforts and to, you know, drive up from them or drive down to them?

MR. ROGERS: Before Andy answers that, I think a huge amount can be done federally that is not being done now. It is ridiculous, I think, that you have got all these different cities that are basically contracting with different consultants, overpaying them in most cases, to try to map their local economies. All of those data are available federally and the feds could make more of them available. I think there are things the Department of Labor could do that it is not doing now and merging different data, which are available federally.

And that should be provided to the NPOs and the CGAs – or CGOs, whatever they are called, in the cities and so on and so forth and the state governments, of course, so that they can begin to have this intelligent discussion at the local level. And none of that stuff is going to cost a huge amount of money to put together. And all that should be provided in a way that is currently just not there. So start with the information. There should be a big federal information push if you are actually going to get intelligent innovation at the state level.

MS. GORDON: Andy, do you want to jump in on that?

MR. LEVIN: Yeah, Kate, I agree with Joel. I mean, first of all, it is outrageous that we don’t have an industrial policy in this country. We need to make things. We need to create value. We need to be intentional about the federal government facilitating us, maintaining a manufacturing policy. But we need to be intentional across all of these issues. And at some point, the decisions do get down to a state and a local level.

So, for example, Michigan, you know, on wind, we are at the center of the Great Lakes. The larger wind turbines are so huge. Transporting them on water is particularly a good idea on big ships. There we are at the center of it and offshore wind has an almost limitless capacity in the Great Lakes. So we have particular ways that we ought to go about wind that are different than other states.

But I think on some of the issues Van raised, intentionality is hugely important. So for example, we had a senator in this country called Barack Obama and he did something that was kind of small. He put language in the safety law or the transportation law that said that states could use a half a percent of their federal highway money to train the highway workforce of the future and to target women, people of color and poor people to diversify the road construction workforce.

Okay, a half a percent of road money isn’t dog doo to the road builders, you know. But to the workforce people, that is big money. I mean, in Michigan, you are talking about $4 million a year. And so we created – we said well, what could we do with this? And we had partners, community-based church organizations that were in our governor’s face demanding this. And the governor was open to – you know, she was not resistant to it. And so I said hmm.

So we got the training directors of the unions involved in highway – laborers, carpenters, iron workers, operating engineers and cement masons together with the church organizers in a quiet, private thing. And we spent three months organizing a pre-apprenticeship program – not to compete with the incredibly powerful unionized industry training program, but to feed people into them. We are in our third year of this. We work with our transportation department to figure out where they are going to build roads, you know, like starting right now. The barrels are up in Michigan now that March has come. And it has evolved into a nine-week program now.

If you get into this thing, you are paid. You get childcare, daycare, transportation, whatever you need. You get your tools. And you have to pass drug tests. It is rigorous. You have to be in school. If you don't show up, you are kicked out. And this year, we are going to pay – still the contractors didn't hire people enough. So this year, we are going to pay them. We are going to pay like half the salary for six weeks of somebody. These are the best-trained graduates. And the unions have embraced this.

It is a small number of people like 120 people a year. But if, you know, we did that times 50, that would be something. We have thousands and thousands of construction workers on the bench in Michigan. So we have to modulate what we are doing. But they have embraced it. So I think we have to be intentional about not just having an industrial policy in the sectoral work, but about the workforce and the educational work, too.

MS. GORDON: Michigan always makes me feel so sheepish. We don't do this everywhere. Lou?

MR. SOARES: I just want to, I hope, pick up on both comments and say that one of the things that we have been talking to both Department of Ed and Labor about is, you know, if we actually are going to build these kind of robust and sustainable alternative pathways and that they are going to be – they will be around. They will be perceived as equally valuable as, you know, our more traditional measures of skill attainment. Then, you know, we can reauthorize WIA and make it look certain ways.

But if we need a different role from these federal agencies, how does what they actually do change? You know, right now one of the reasons that what Joel said about information doesn't happen is it's not what the Department of Labor is hardwired for. And I think that in the best cases when they have time because in both departments, there are many issues that they have to deal with, they do think about that a little bit and what is our role. And at the risk of incurring Joel's BS meter, I have a metaphor that I use often, which is, you know, right now federal agencies see themselves as primarily either program funders or rule makers.

What I suggest is that they need to see themselves as network orchestrators and that they have got a network of folks doing work around the country and that how do like the Department of Labor in the area of employment and training, for example, how does it look at its functions through that lens to make that network successful?

And how would it change its internal operation to make that network of regional partnerships or however you want to define them? And it is a tough challenge at the federal level. But it has intention in it because we are actually looking at the federal management architecture for this stuff and not just the enabling legislation that makes other things happen on the ground in the states.

MS. GORDON: Van, did you want to jump in on this and say anything before we open up to a couple of questions?

MR. JONES: Well, I mean, I do because this question occurs in a political context where, you know, when you say industrial policy, you know, half of the electorate's ears hear a different term.

MR. LEVIN: Sorry, can you give a new term?

MR. JONES: No, I don't have one. But what I think we have got to be clear about and try to reiterate is that we see a role for government in getting this transition pulled off. But it is a limited and specific role. We want the government to be a partner to the problem solvers on this question. The problem solvers on this question are going to be our clean energy entrepreneur.

Right now unfortunately, government is a partner to the problem makers on too many of these questions. And that is part of what we are trying to push back against. But I think we have a challenge – I think we have a communications challenge here minimally. This is part of a big American success story. It is another iteration. The railroads, the Internet, the Apollo moon shot, for some, the Manhattan Project. There are times in American history where public and private determined action can change the direction of the country.

If you can't pull that off in those moments, you fall behind, which is the – Friedman talks about we won the space race, but we are about to lose the earth race as we become the country that is apparently going to be last out of the blocks on renewable energy in a nation that has a Saudi Arabia of solar and wind power right here.

But I think that as we talk about this stuff, we have got to remind people that this is about unsticking and unfreezing an overly regulated, overly subsidized, stuck energy market that is stuck on last century's technology. I mean, we are using petroleum like it is something interesting. That is like the post-whale oil strategy. (Laughter.) You know, we ran out of whales. There is this black goo in the ground and we haven't, you know, changed since then.

So we are on the side of entrepreneurship. We are on the side of innovation. We are on the side of unleashing markets. But you cannot do that if you don't have much more robust and intelligent partnership from the American government, as we have had every other time we have reached for greatness.

MS. GORDON: That is great. Thank you. I loved the post-whale oil. That is great. We have a mike. We have questions. Greg LeRoy, I see, has one. I will give it to him.

Q: Thanks. Greg LeRoy with Good Jobs First. Two things that Van and Andy said. I would like to hear more from Van about his green opportunity zones idea. I heard you mention it sort of briefly a couple of times. But also caution, you know, there is a really tragic history at the state level about state-enabled enterprise zones. They have really come for naught and are now really mostly perverted, frankly, at the state level. Like TIF districts, the same problem.

And I am much more interested in not geographically isolating what states can do with their powers. And I turn to Michigan and I think so you control all these incentives both at the state level and all the locally granted incentives that are enabled and regulated by state rules, right down to your industrial facility's property tax exemption, programs and all the other big giveaways in the state of Michigan.

You could be greening those tomorrow. You could be conditioning them on emissions reduction, on recycling usage, on transit location efficiency, on progressive workforce policies like the one that you have implemented thanks to the – (inaudible) – set-aside program. There are lots of things you could be doing in a very – obviously, all the states are very budget constrained right now. You have got to do more with less. And to me, I think the challenge is attaching green strings to your existing incentive programs.

MS. GORDON: Either one of you. Go, Andy, why don't you start? I will just call on you.

MR. LEVIN: I think it is a great idea. I mean, most of the incentives that we give are for renewable energy companies, but not all. And we certainly, you know, probably could put other strings on them. I think that the whole sort of world of incentives for economic development needs to be rethought. It is sort of both not generous enough and way too giving away the store all at the same time.

And so I think we could have a much more interesting paradigm. I mean, this isn't – you know, I really more do the workforce side than the economic development side. But as I watch it, you know, it is ever open to the criticism of looking at it down the road and how many jobs are really associated with the specific projects that were incentivized. And, you know, there are serious questions about that. And so I think we do really need new ways of getting that done.

Also, I mean, frankly, to go back to one of the points I was making, whatever we should call having a national policy to encourage the development of productive capacity, not having one just leads to a war of – the race to the bottom of the states of who can give – and then locality – who could give away the most to a company to locate in one place versus another? And that is a completely unproductive exercise.

And one way, I think, that – one of the best ways to have a policy that would really create economic activity and opportunity would be to decide to do big things. So for example, on, you know, bullet trains, I mean, you know, sitting in Detroit, it is crazy to fly to Cleveland, to fly to Cincinnati, to fly to Chicago or to fly to Toronto. And if you look at a map, Detroit is at the center of a star.

And many cities are the center of a star like that. And if the United States decided that it was going to build the infrastructure and build the equipment to operate this, the amount of economic activity it would generate would be humongous. And I would like to see us move more in that direction than focusing only on incentives.

MS. GORDON: Van, you want to say a quick word on the green opportunity zone thing? What happens when –

MR. JONES: Every time I say it, smart people like yourself say but that doesn't work. So then I have to go back to the drawing board. I would like to actually work with you on figuring this one out, though. I really do think that – I mean, first of all, I think that energy and water are special, period. You can't run an economy without one or you can't run anything without the other. So trying to figure out – so we know that there is going to be increasing opportunity there because we are going to be running up against constraints on traditional forms of energy and water going forward.

Since we know that, we are going to be pushed there anyway. There is an opportunity, I think, to be very smart about where we want to do what in this area. And I think at least advocates should have an idea. And then what my time in D.C. has shown me is that even when people get it, they just don't have the policy tools. And most of the anti-poverty tools that we have are still from obviously the '90s because we haven't done a lot of work on poverty since the Clinton administration. So we have very rusty anti-poverty tools.

We are making these new energy policy tools. I think that there has got to be a convergence where we can take the best of what works – and you know that better than I do – from the anti-poverty side and combine it with the best of what is going to work on the energy side.

MS. GORDON: I am getting pressure from our events people, so I can only do one more question. I know that is not fair, but we are going to have a break right after this, where you can ask questions to these folks. In the back, you were first, back there. Yeah, we have to do setup for the next one.

Q: Hi, thanks, Kate. Scott Bernstein, Center for Neighborhood Technology. Great comments, all. Joel, your opening comment about the need to have a much more productive economy suggests that perhaps one of the policy toolsets we are lacking in is screening what we are investing to get that higher productivity. And what are those tools and what do they look like?

Louis had a good suggestion with a network coordinator. But what else should be coordinated in the network? We are going to be older. Households are going to be smaller. Activities are going to have to be more place based. I am glad Greg mentioned location efficiency. You know, what else besides supplying things. And, you know, what does it take to be more productive?

I mean, what I have heard is a lot of suggestions on how to green up workforce development and how to pick better winners on what it is that we make and how to make more of it. But does that add up to a more productive economy all by itself if the cost of living ends up increasing faster, for example, than income? So what is the definition of that higher productivity? And what else do we have to coordinate in order to get that more productive economy? Is this really just about employing more people or what else?

MS. GORDON: Scott just took two of your three minutes, unfortunately. So now you have got to go fast. (Chuckles.)

MR. ROGERS: Well, those of you that know me know this rap, and those of you who don't, here it goes. I believe in building the high road now. The high road means add value. That is the innovation stuff. Reduce waste. That is your density and coordination of the transit and the water and the energy and take advantage of the fact and capture the benefits of doing both locally in the nation, in a city, whatever it is. Okay? That is what I think you need to do.

I don't mean by – I have no interest in people becoming wildly productive and driving a million miles and spending away all their income on doing that. We should obviously have more sensible patterns of settlement and energy use and transit and all of that. So that is what you would do.

What I want is for the federal government, as long as the network stuff and redefining the role, I would like them to be more intentional about the spatial bases of the economy. The fact that the top 100 metro areas and then you go a little bit beyond those capture virtually all the economy on a very small portion of the land mass. I would like that stuff – living in that land mass should be a happy thing for people. It should be safe. It should be healthy. They should have access to food and transit choice and transportation choice and their kids should be educated, blah, blah, blah, blah.

If we get those places well-organized in that way, I think we will be fine. But I also think that the states – the states are wonderful. But as you know, they behave like sick people stealing each other's medicine. (Laughter.) They run around. They run around and they are always at war about their subsidies, those – (inaudible) – do you want the strings?

You also need the feds to push the states to say look, we will give you an information platform and we will respect your authority in different areas. But we really are not going to encourage your continuing to behave in this destructive way. And there are ways the feds could do that easily. But I promised Jean (sp) – (inaudible) – to say one other thing. It starts with the kids. (Laughter.) Now I will be quiet.

MS. GORDON: So just before I thank the panel, I wanted to say folks, definitely stick around. We have a great conversation coming up with Phil Angelides and Jared Bernstein. A quick break before that to just reorient the front, so that we take away the table and put up some chairs and make it look like Oprah.

But before that, thank you so much to the panel who are just incredibly smart and interesting people. And now you have a break in which you can capture them and ask them questions. Thank you.

(END)