

ReImagine Appalachia

A NEW DEAL THAT WORKS FOR US

Appalachians have a long history of hard work, resilience, and coming together to face enormous challenges. Our region is a place of ingenuity. A place where families and neighbors look out for one another.

Now is the time to put our ingenuity to use and imagine a 21st century economy that works for the people in the Ohio River Valley of Appalachia. An economy that is good for working people, communities, our health and the health of our neighbors. One that is grounded in the land and centered on creating wealth locally. One that relies on working people, already skilled in service, industry, trades and farming. One that offers hope to the next generation's workers—regardless of the color of their skin, ethnicity or gender. And one that does our region's part to meet the nation's climate challenge, just as we met the call to provide coal energy to fuel a growing nation a century ago.

Right now, our nation is in crisis. We face the COVID epidemic, a deep economic downturn, extreme inequality, racism, police brutality, and the consequences of a changing climate such as severe storms and flooding. These crises demand from us real, lasting and structural change. It is not a matter of if, but when. When the nation rises to the occasion, people in Appalachia need to be at the table and helping to lead the charge. Together, we can build a vision for the Appalachia we want to live in.

Federal economic stimulus and national climate change legislation present opportunities to bring much needed federal resources into the region. Appalachia deserves its fair share.

For more than two centuries, corporations have extracted enormous wealth from our region for the profit of owners and shareholders while the region is left with high rates of poverty, unemployment and low wages. In the past, the people of Appalachia organized and rose up together to demand shared prosperity and

improve their lives by fighting to end 72-hour work weeks, dangerous working conditions and low wages.

Despite these successes, absentee corporations continue to drain wealth from Appalachia. They use their power and influence to get policymakers to rig the rules in their favor, enabling their bad behavior: paying too many people in our region too little, abandoning their reclamation responsibilities and worker pensions, polluting our air and water, and making their workers and our neighbors sick, particularly Black, Indigenous and other communities of color. Coal corporations have left their mark on Appalachia, but in many ways, the people who live here have never truly reaped the benefits from our immense natural resources.

The people of the region, with the right federal resources, can build a 21st century Appalachia, where everyone has a good-paying job with good benefits and responsible employers help protect the environment and the health of the people who live in it.

We are building a framework to ReImagine Appalachia.

This blueprint incorporates voices from across the region. The effort was convened by Policy Matters Ohio, a state-focused economic and policy research institute, and its sister organizations in West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Kentucky (West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy, Keystone Research Center and Kentucky Center for Economic Policy). We built off the grassroots effort to ReImagine Beaver County. PennFuture, West Virginia Rivers Coalition, Ohio Interfaith Power and Light, Breathe Project and the National Wildlife Federation were also key partners. We captured the expertise of both grassstop and grassroot leaders to reimagine the region in a virtual two-day convening as well as listening sessions for union leaders, racial and community justice advocates, environmental groups and others. The framework has already been endorsed by over 50 organizations representing the voices of residents across the four states of the Ohio River Valley—Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Kentucky.

**The conversations continue:
Please add your voice to the
vision and help us make the
vision a reality.**



A NEW DEAL THAT WORKS FOR US WOULD:

1. Expand opportunity through public investments:



Maximize good union jobs.



Provide fossil fuel workers with genuine opportunities doing the work.



Ensure access to union jobs for Black, Indigenous, women and low-wage workers.



Ensure community benefits from federal investments via public input and community oversight.

2. Build a 21st Century sustainable Appalachia:



Restore our damaged lands and waters.



Modernize the electric grid:
Decentralize generation, increase use of clean energy and expand broadband.



Grow manufacturing by making it cleaner and more efficient while also making Appalachia a hub for electric vehicle production and alternatives to single-use plastic.



Build a sustainable transportation system and create new jobs for transit workers.



Revive the Civilian Conservation Corps: Reforest the region, restore wetlands, promote regenerative agriculture and eco-tourism while simultaneously absorbing greenhouse gases with natural landscapes.



3. Rebuild the middle class:



Promote union rights, better pay, benefits and local ownership models for working people across all industries in the region.

ReImagine Appalachia

Expand opportunity through public investments

Transforming Appalachia into a 21st century sustainable economy—one that is good for workers, communities and our health—will require significant federal resources. We can and should accept nothing less given the immense wealth extracted from Appalachia over the past centuries. The Ohio River Valley of the Appalachian region has fueled the prosperity of other regions while we have suffered. Many of our communities rank in the bottom 10 percent nationally for their high unemployment and poverty rates and low incomes. The public investments needed in our region must come with strings attached to make sure they maximize good union jobs, ensure coal workers have a secure future, and build career ladders for new entrants into the workforce.

Maximize good union jobs.

Federal policymakers should attach requirements to public funds to maximize creation of good union jobs and require greater diversity and inclusion in our future workforce.

Publicly-funded construction projects must require project labor agreements, prevailing wages and apprentice-utilization requirements, with a large share of apprentices coming from low-income, underrepresented communities. Publicly-subsidized companies—in construction and more permanent work—must also be required to honor workers' freedom to unionize and provide diverse workers the opportunity to enter rewarding careers in the unionized trades.

Ensure genuine opportunities for fossil fuel workers.

The region's workforce can pivot to meet the needs of our 21st century economy. We just need to recognize that workers in extractive industries—mine workers, union electricians, laborers and other trades—have foundational skills that remain critically important in the work going

forward. Fossil fuel workers should be targeted for new opportunities created from public investments.

Create access to good union jobs for low-wage workers, regardless of race or gender.

Jobs created from public investments should give priority in hiring and training to coal workers, women, and Black, Indigenous and brown workers shut out by past discrimination in hiring, education, or opportunity. To fully harness the region's potential, the future of the Appalachian workforce must reflect the diversity of the Appalachian community. As in the rest of America, the contribution of these communities hasn't been acknowledged or valued. This must change. The new Appalachian economy must be built on basic principles of justice. Other communities have made these values real through targeted community benefit agreements and policies. Any large projects funded with public dollars should

require a percentage of union apprentices to come from low-income neighborhoods near project sites and set aside 2% of any project's resources for registered pre-apprenticeship programs managed via labor-community partnerships to build the pipeline of diverse workers into union work.

Require public input and oversight of these federal investments.

To set priorities for publicly-funded construction projects, state and local governments should create regional Community Benefit Advisory Panels.

Federal policy guidance is needed for these Advisory Panels. They must include union labor, contractor, environmental, and community representatives, in addition to relevant public officials. They should be charged with considering a proposal's emissions reduction benefits as well as health, racial, and social equity impacts. Any identified negative impact of a project must be mitigated. They should establish responsible contractor policies to ensure workers have rights on the job, and to develop hiring pipelines and registered pre-apprenticeship opportunities. Over time, the Advisory Panel can study best practices and implement new policies based on lessons learned.

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ReImagine Appalachia

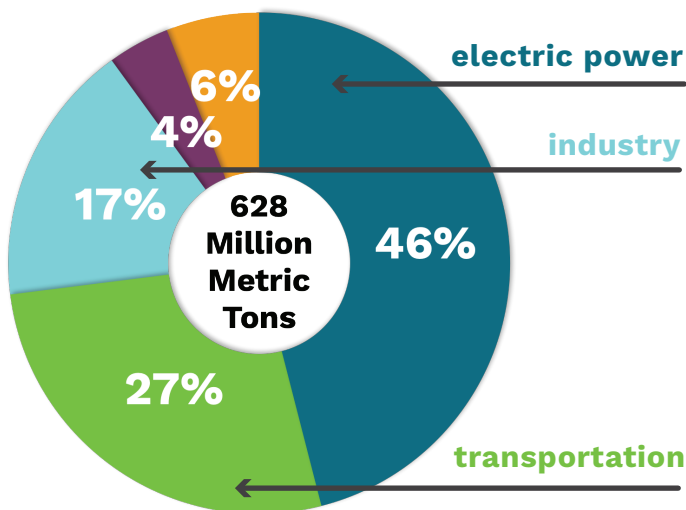
Build a 21st century sustainable economy

Appalachia can meet the climate challenge—achieving carbon neutrality by 2050—by first identifying where our emissions come from, how we use energy and where we spend our energy dollars.

90%

OF THE REGION'S EMISSIONS
COME FROM THREE SECTORS

1



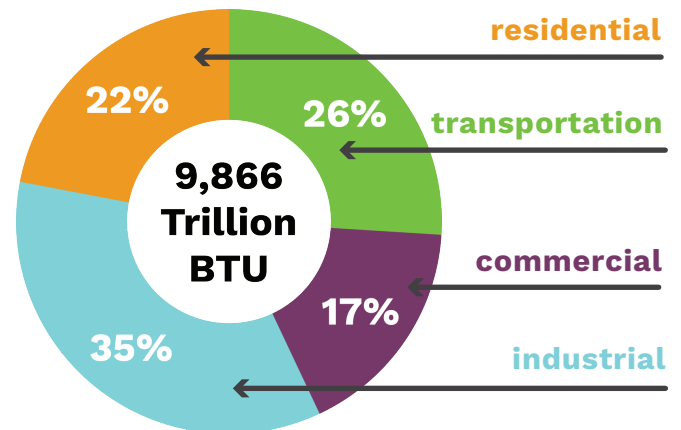
The electric power industry in Appalachia's Ohio River Valley—Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Kentucky—accounts for 17% of all U.S. electric sector emissions.

MANUFACTURING USES OVER

1/3

OF THE FOUR STATE
REGION'S TOTAL ENERGY.

2



Factories run machines and tools by pulling in electricity from the grid. They also burn fossil fuels on-site to heat metals and chemicals.

**NEARLY HALF (43%)
OF THE \$107 BILLION
SPENT ON ENERGY
IN 2017, ACROSS OUR
FOUR-STATE
REGION, GOES TO
FUEL CARS AND
TRUCKS.**

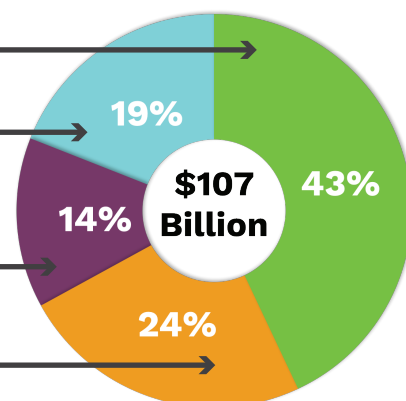
3

transportation

industrial

commercial

residential



Whether it's for industries to operate or for families to heat their homes, run errands or go to school and work, consuming energy is expensive. With the right investments in our energy systems, we can use our energy resources more wisely while saving money to pay our workers better or the rent. A 21st century sustainable, energy-wise economy in Appalachia requires aggressive upgrades to our electric grid, investments in the next generation of manufacturing, and a modern transportation system. We don't have to eliminate every single ton of greenhouse gas to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. Appalachia's rich natural landscapes can absorb carbon via reforestation and wetland restoration while growing local farms and food networks.

Repair the damage done over the last century.

We must demand our public officials take care of people who contracted black lung disease and other chronic health problems while working in extractive industries, and we must demand they hold the responsible corporations accountable. These workers must be able to retire with dignity, with the health care they need as well as the retirement pensions they deserve.

With federal funding, Appalachian communities can reclaim and remediate abandoned coal mines and coal ash ponds left behind at shuttered power plants, putting them back to good use while cleaning up the Ohio River and its watershed tributaries. Orphaned oil and gas wells must also be capped.

Climate change is already causing damage in the Ohio River Valley. Severe storms have damaged our infrastructure and flooded our homes, communities, and farms, and made people sick. Heat waves exacerbate asthma, cause heat exhaustion and dehydration, impacting seniors, infants, children and pregnant women in particular. Longer and more intense allergy seasons while flooding contaminates our drinking water, increases rates of Lyme disease and mosquito-borne illnesses, affects farm crop yields and access to healthy foods.

The public investments we make today to stem climate change will pay off in the long run by protecting our health and the health of future generations. In the short run, we must demand our leaders address the climate impacts we face today. For example, making our electric grid less susceptible to outages and storm damage can create good union jobs by putting people to work.

Repairing dams to control flooding and investing in building natural infrastructure to absorb water overflows will require a workforce with a variety of skills. Solving the climate crisis is a reemployment plan for the Ohio River Valley and an investment in the region's future.

Modernize the electric grid. The Rural Electrification Program, a New Deal innovation, brought electricity to rural areas in Appalachia and the South, where there was no market or financial incentive for private capital to invest. This publicly funded venture transformed the region and built many of the electric co-ops that still serve Appalachian communities today. It also left many behind. Co-op boards and utility coverage frequently excluded Black residents as well as white residents from more remote parts of the region, deepening race and class inequality.

It is time for an upgrade: the Rural Grid Modernization Program. Policymakers must invest in a modern rural grid that brings efficient and affordable energy to industries and families. Like the Rural Electrification Program, this program will create tens of thousands of construction, maintenance and utility jobs. Unlike the Rural Electrification Program, this time policymakers must make sure the investment benefits all of us, no matter what we look like or where we live.

Appalachia helps power the nation, but the electric grid in our region needs a serious upgrade. Three lumps of coal generate only one lump worth of electric power. We waste the others in generation and transmission, increasing costs and unnecessarily polluting the air we breathe. It makes us broke and sick. We need a smarter grid, with more efficient and decentralized generation built by union labor, including utility-scale solar farms on remediated brownfields. We also need investments in energy storage for renewable resources.

High quality, affordable broadband is foundational for a prosperous 21st century Appalachia. Children and families—and the local businesses, schools and health care institutions that serve them—require broadband to ensure their well-being. All Appalachians, regardless of their income or race, must be able to access the internet. Universal broadband is also necessary for a smart grid.

Residential and small business energy efficiency programs create a win-win-win by reducing energy usage and emissions, lowering energy bills and creating jobs. The federal Weatherization Assistance

Program is an example of how public policies can solve problems for both people and the environment. The program improves homes of people with low incomes, helping them make ends meet by saving on energy costs. We can also enlist folks in low-income communities to help do the work at prevailing wages. This program should be significantly expanded.

Invest in cleaner and more efficient

manufacturing. Our vision expands manufacturing in Appalachia. Shuttered coal plants can be repurposed into eco-industrial parks that use circular manufacturing methods to turn one company's waste into another's raw material. Coal plant boilers and turbines at existing sites can be repurposed for combined heat and power purposes, providing a more efficient way to meet the heat and power needs of manufacturers, by capturing waste heat generated during the production of electricity. Industrial assessment centers and manufacturing energy partnerships can provide low-cost industrial energy audits and energy-efficiency training for the workforce. To help manufacturers modernize, the federal government should also promote labor-management partnerships and manufacturing apprenticeships.

With public funding to retool existing facilities, Appalachia could be a hub for creating the responsible products of the future, such as alternatives to single-use plastic, green building materials, or the electric vehicle supply chain. As the world demands more socially and environmentally conscious products, we are well-positioned to rise to the occasion. Plastic alternatives can even be made from farm-grown resources in the region, such as industrial hemp.

Unfair trade practices and policies encourage corporations to hold down workers' wages and cut corners on protecting our health and the environment. Federal policymakers should enact a border tax on countries that have lower wage, safety and environmental standards than the U.S. It's time to take the high road with our trade policies rather than taking part in a race to the bottom.

Appalachia has all the tools to be an economic powerhouse—from repurposing the infrastructure of the past, to building the products of the future. We can prosper while protecting workers and the environment.

Build a sustainable transportation system. In 2017, nearly half of the \$107 billion spent on energy across our region went toward transportation—about \$47 billion. Most of it pays for fuel imported from elsewhere. Federal policymakers can help us build local wealth and put tens of thousands of people to work upgrading existing rail and laying new lines for an Appalachian corridor, expanding public transportation and building electric vehicle infrastructure such as charging stations. These are investments policymakers should start making now. The shift to electric vehicles also needs to include consumer subsidies (e.g. “cash for clunkers”) so that rural farmers, public transit systems, construction trades, and other workers with long commutes can afford these more efficient electric vehicles and stop sinking considerable shares of the family budget into the high cost of gas. An Appalachian rail corridor, connecting rural areas to the urban core, can provide a less expensive form of transportation for longer-distance travel, while reducing the energy dollars we spend on petroleum products imported from outside the region.

Absorb carbon with natural landscapes, revive the Civilian Conservation Corp. With its abundance of trees, wetlands, farmland and plants, Appalachia is rich in carbon-absorbing natural resources. Investments in our natural infrastructure to support “carbon farming” would move us toward carbon neutrality by absorbing more greenhouse gases. Public spending on natural infrastructure could also create cheaper, better ways to protect and purify our water supply, support nature-based recreation and tourism and grow the local economy. Prior generations made similar investments.

During the Great Depression, the New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps put 3 million unemployed people (including 85,000 Native Americans) to work planting over 3 billion trees, restoring 80 million acres of farmland and about 4,000 historic structures, and much, much, more. We must resurrect this federal job creation program.

Reviving the New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps could put people to work restoring wetlands, planting millions of diverse, native plants and trees (especially hardwoods and food trees), reforesting the region and removing the most invasive trees and shrubs. A modern CCC could protect the climate, create decent work, restore the land and improve public health by promoting healthier diets. Local organic farming can provide food to families in the



food-insecure areas of Appalachia. We need to enhance the availability, affordability and familiarity of locally grown and plant-based foods.

Instead of giving away subsidies to big ag corporations that degrade the land, federal policymakers can foster regenerative farming practices and support local farmers and food networks. Regenerative agriculture—e.g. planting cover crops, reducing pesticides, capturing animal-produced methane, and other organic methods that increase biodiversity—can yield more income and lower expenses for farmers, while also absorbing carbon in our soil.

Sustainable practices are a natural fit for the region's farmers, who do not want to harm the land they pass to future generations.

The value of the Civilian Conservation Corps program could be increased by targeted hiring of returning citizens caught up in the ill-considered “war on drugs” and opioid crisis, incarcerated for being sick with addiction rather than getting the treatment they needed. Public investments can protect the environment, restore our health, and rebuild lives.

ReImagine Appalachia

Rebuild the middle class: Union rights, better pay, local ownership

Even in a sustainable, 21st century Appalachia, most jobs, and a large share of low-wage jobs, will continue to be in service and other local industries tied to our communities where their customers and workers live. These industries include many businesses employing essential workers—such as health care, grocery and retail stores, restaurants, distribution and package delivery, and early childhood education. These industries also employ a large share of women, many of whom are Black, Indigenous and other people of color. We cannot restore shared prosperity or achieve racial and gender justice without improving the pay and benefits of these jobs. We must demand our policymakers substantially raise the minimum wage and

give workers in all industries the freedom to collectively bargain to raise their wages and improve their benefits. Our workforce also needs access to universal health and child care.

The only way to rebuild the middle class is by building from the bottom-up. Policy should also support multiple forms of local ownership, including cooperatives, worker ownership, and networks. And going forward, these workplaces must be located in areas more accessible by public transit and connected to safe routes for people who bike and walk, like rural town centers.

THE CAMPAIGN: A NEW DEAL THAT WORKS FOR APPALACHIA

The campaign to Reimagine Appalachia is building a better future for our region. For decades, we have been denied this future by policies crafted by and for distant corporations and the wealthiest 1%. Some of these corporations may pose as blue-collar workers' friends, but finance anti-worker, anti-union, anti-environment policies designed to keep us struggling and divided while lining their pockets. Even before the coronavirus, if you asked most working people in our region "Is this economy working for you?" they would answer: "No."

Appalachia can do better—and should—but not by believing extractive corporations that failed us for a century will finally share prosperity in the 2020s. Never have. Never will.

Appalachia has all the right ingredients to lead the United States toward economic recovery. Our region can build a strong and lasting economy based on investments in a clean economic future that puts workers first, respects our communities, takes care of the land, and grows local wealth.

Bottom line

The work of Reimagine Appalachia is time sensitive. Federal policymakers are already designing stimulus and infrastructure packages to lift us out of the COVID depression, work that is likely to intensify after the presidential election. In addition, long-overdue debates about climate legislation and racial justice are intensifying.

The United States will rebuild and retool—it is already starting —and it is vital that the people of Appalachia have a say in how that happens. Appalachia needs to be at the table or we will be on the menu.

It's time. Let's create a New Deal that WORKS for us.

Join with us to help reimagine Appalachia into the world we want to live in and leave to our future generations. Visit ReImagineAppalachia.org to learn how.

List of current endorsers

Appalachian Citizens' Law Center (ACLC)
Appalachian Voices
Appalshop
Art of Pieces
Ashtabula County Young Democrats
Athens County's Future Action Network
BCMAC-Beaver County Marcellus Awareness Community
Black Women Rising
Breathe Project
Center for Energy & Sustainable Development, WVU College of Law
Children's Defense Fund-Ohio
Climate Reality Pittsburgh
Communities First Sewickley
Concerned Ohio River Residents
Congress on Faith and Justice
Earthworks
Foundation for PA Watersheds
FracTracker
Freshwater Accountability Project

Institute for Sustainable Power
Izaak Walton League of America-Allegheny County
Kentucky Center for Economic Policy
Kentucky Resources Council, Inc.
Kentucky Waterways Alliance
Keystone Research Center
Mid-Ohio Valley Climate Action
Mountain State Justice
National Association of Social Workers West Virginia Chapter
National Wildlife Federation
New Morning Energy, LLC
Ohio Environmental Council
Ohio Interfaith Power & Light
Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition
PASA Sustainable Agriculture
PennFuture
Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Planned Parenthood South Atlantic
Plant-Based Pittsburgh
Policy Matters Ohio

Powhatan Point Church of the Nazarene
Protect PT (Penn-Trafford)
ReImagine Beaver County
ReImagine Butler County
Revolt Energy
RiverWise
Slippery Rock University Sustainable Enterprise Accelerator
Solar United Neighbors
SWPA Environmental Health Project
The Battle of Homestead Foundation
Thrive At Life: Working Solutions
West Liberty University
West Virginia Center on Budget & Policy
West Virginia Environmental Council
West Virginia Headwaters Waterkeeper
West Virginia Interfaith Power and Light
West Virginia National Organization of Women
West Virginia Rivers Coalition
WV Citizen Action