



August 23, 2021

Dear Members of Pennsylvania's Congressional Delegation,

As conversations about federal infrastructure legislation advance, whether on one or two tracks, we want to highlight key priorities that must be part of legislation this year to benefit the Appalachian region and the entire state of Pennsylvania. Our region has long provided raw materials to fuel the prosperity of the nation without our region's workers sharing in that prosperity.

Federal infrastructure and climate legislation present opportunities to bring much-needed federal resources into the region. Our state, like all of Appalachia, deserves a targeted share of these resources--one that reflects our job loss and the damage caused by a history of extraction, the contributions we made to the nation's prosperity over the last century, and one that delivers the economic opportunities for which our families and communities deserve. Too many of our Pennsylvania communities have high unemployment and poverty rates, while others have experienced wage stagnation and downward mobility.

Pennsylvania deserves a Climate Infrastructure Plan that will build local wealth and create good union jobs while laying the foundation for a more sustainable economy over the long haul. Congress has the opportunity to put our state's skills and strengths to work building a 21st Century economy. The infrastructure package(s) must include investments and incentives and requirements, including community and labor standards, and provide explicit direction to agencies to deploy these funds to maximize the benefits of the investments for workers and the health of our communities.

WE MUST INVEST IN A 21ST CENTURY SUSTAINABLE PENNSYLVANIA AND APPALACHIA BY:

- Repairing the damage from the last century: plugging orphan oil & gas wells, remediating abandoned mine lands and coal ash ponds, repairing dams & levees, repairing leaks in gas pipelines. Pennsylvania has a third of the nation's abandoned mine acreage and as many as 200,000 uncapped oil and gas wells and should receive at least a quarter of infrastructure funds for repairing the damage--e.g., \$4 billion of \$16 billion proposed in the American Jobs Plan. Many of these jobs fit well with the existing skills of fossil fuel industry workers and are needed to create the Appalachia we want to live in.

- Modernizing and upgrading the electric grid, with underground power lines that increase the grid's resilience to catastrophic weather events, reinforcing the electric grid for more distributed energy generation of the future, utility-scale clean energy, and investments in energy storage for renewable resources.
- Bringing fast, affordable, reliable broadband to rural areas and city neighborhoods, including by charging the Rural Utilities Services with emulating the New Deal's success bringing electricity to farms during the Great Depression, including through rural cooperatives and municipal utilities. Broadband is now a basic utility, like water, electricity, and transportation, a requirement for smart grid, for businesses, for education, for farmers, for communities and regions to thrive. Infrastructure legislation should include funding for statewide assessments of connectivity and require states to map out how they will use federal funds to make quality, affordable broadband universal (as well as the dollars needed to build out the system).
- Growing clean, efficient manufacturing, including by repurposing shuttered coal plants and former steel facilities into eco-industrial parks with access to combined heat and power, efficiency services and clean energy resources. The federal government should help manufacturers modernize by funding manufacturing extension partnerships and industrial centers to provide low-cost industrial energy audits; supporting labor-management partnerships and manufacturing apprenticeships; and, funding industry-labor-university institutes that capitalize on Pennsylvania and Appalachia skills, engineering know-how, and research to make our state and region global leaders in next generation products such as electric vehicle components, battery technology, and bioplastics made from agricultural products produced in the region.
- Building a more sustainable transportation system: expand, electrify and upgrade public transit and freight rail; expand access to electric vehicles and EV charging stations; use subsidies to make EVs affordable for rural farmers, truck drivers, and construction trades and public transit affordable for workers, and ensure those EVs are made in America (with pieces and parts that come from Appalachian states).
- Relaunching and updating the 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps to restore forests and waterways, repair damaged lands, help farmers adopt carbon absorbing regenerative practices, and create pathways to meaningful careers, including for returning citizens and for women and people of color.

WE MUST ENSURE THAT FEDERAL INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS MAXIMIZE BENEFITS FOR PENNSYLVANIA AND APPALACHIA WITH STRONG LABOR AND COMMUNITY STANDARDS

Maximize creation of good union jobs by

- Requiring Project Labor Agreements on all construction projects receiving more than \$100,000 in federal funds and that have a total project value of at least \$1,000,000

- Bundling small projects into aggregate contracts of at least \$1 million, such as installing solar panels on schools and municipal buildings across all of Pennsylvania or reclaiming abandoned mine lands and capping orphaned oil and gas wells throughout the state or a region.
- Ensuring workers have the right to form unions and bargain collectively in permanent jobs resulting from public investments
- Target benefits of job creation to coal industry workers and communities previously left behind.
- Develop a funding formula for a climate infrastructure investment package that gives priority to high-poverty census tracts, especially those with shuttered coal plants, former steel facilities, abandoned mine lands, and/or orphaned oil and gas wells.
- Create targeted hiring programs for historically disadvantaged groups, e.g Black workers, women and other people of color and for former coal workers. For example, reserve 20% of project hours for registered apprentices or pre-apprentices, with half of those work hours completed by workers from targeted hiring programs.
- Build a training and hiring pipeline that enables low-income residents to qualify for good union jobs for workers that have been left behind. Fund unions and labor-management partnerships to enable these workers, as well as coal miners and coal power plant workers, to move into a good new union in the place they live and call home.
- Require creation of Community Benefit Advisory Boards with representation from labor, community and employers to ensure successful implementation, community input, tracking, reporting, and accountability

As you consider the goals, legislative language, and appropriations of an infrastructure package, we urge you to focus on these priorities. These provisions could enable federal infrastructure legislation to kick start the creation of a “New Deal That Works for US” in Pennsylvania and across Appalachia. The ReImagine Appalachia campaign also has economists, labor policy experts, community advocates, community development experts ready to answer your questions, provide case studies, or help your staff further operationalize these recommendations.

This year’s federal infrastructure legislation is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for you to restore hope and shared prosperity to your district and to our state. We look forward to helping you seize the opportunity.

Signed,

ReImagine Appalachia	Dana Kuhnline	Campaign Director
Keystone Research Center	Stephen Herzenberg	Executive Director
PennFuture	Jacquelyn Bonomo	President & CEO
Pa. AFL-CIO	Rick Bloomingdale	President
League of Women Voters Pennsylvania	Dr. Terrie Griffin	President, LWV PA
Pennsylvania Council of Churches	Rev. Sandra L. Strauss	Director of Advocacy & Ecumenical Outreach

Allegheny County Clean Air Now (ACCAN)	Angelo Taranto	Secretary/Treasurer
Bike Pittsburgh	Scott Bricker	Executive Director
Breathe Project	Matthew Mehalik	Executive Director
Center for Coalfield Justice	Veronica Coptis	Executive Director
Clean Air Council	Joseph O. Minott	Executive Director and Chief Counsel
Clean Water Action	Steve Hvozdoovich	Pennsylvania Campaigns Director
Communities First Sewickley Valley	Gail Murray	Communications Director
Community Partners in Asthma Care, Inc.	Deborah Gentile, MD	Medical Director
Conservation Voters of PA	Katie Blume	Political Director
Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation	Bobby Hughes	Executive Director
Environmental Health Project	Alison L. Steele	Executive Director
FracTracker Alliance	Brook Lenker	Executive Director
Green Building Alliance	Green Building Alliance	VP of Planning and Policy
Keystone Energy Efficiency Alliance	Jeaneen Zappa	Executive Director
Moms Clean Air Force- Pennsylvania Chapter	Brooke Petry	Field Organizer
Mountain Watershed Association	Ashley Funk	Executive Director
PA Budget and Policy Center	Marc Stier	Director
Pennsylvania United	Jennifer Rafanan Kennedy	Managing Director
Pittsburghers for Public Transit	Laura Chu Wiens	Executive Director
Plant-Based Pittsburgh	Sally Lipsky	president
Protect Franklin Park	Patrick Pagano	Dr., Cofounder
Rail Pollution Protection Pittsburgh (RP3)	Glenn Olcerst	Co-Founder & General Counsel
RiverWise	Daniel Rossi-Keen, PhD	Executive Director
Solar United Neighbors of Pennsylvania	Henry McKay	Pennsylvania Program Director
Student Conservation Association	Jennifer Layman	Regional Vice President for Partnership
Sustainable Pittsburgh	Joylette Portlock	Executive Director
The 99% Pennsylvania campaign	Jeff Garis	Federal Campaigns & Program Director
The Evangelical Environmental Network	Rev. Mitchell C. Hescoc	President/C.E.O.
Vote Solar		
We the People PA	Nick Pressley	Campaign Director