

WED NEWS

From the California Labor Federation – AFL-CIO

If We Can Put a Man on the Moon, We Can Put America to Work –
The New Apollo Project

By Tracy Baxter

Big ideas fuel American progress. For proof, look no further than the Apollo Project. In 1962, President John F. Kennedy challenged the nation to put a man on the moon and back again before the decade ended. Not only was JFK's dream realized, but the commitment of the nation's resources to the task also sent the aerospace industry into overdrive, creating jobs in that sector and beyond.

In the same spirit of bold leadership, the Apollo Alliance, a national coalition of seventeen labor unions, and environmental, civil rights, business, and political leaders, is spearheading a new Apollo Project. The initiative aims to rally public support around a decade-long, \$300 billion clean technologies program for energy independence. A public-private effort to redirect investment dollars to green enterprises, the Apollo Project will generate an estimated three million good jobs across industry sectors, putting the U.S. closer to energy self-reliance. Here in California, the California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO and WED have brought together the California Apollo Project, with union, community-based organizations and environmentalists.

Over the last four years the U.S. lost 11 percent of its manufacturing jobs. During that same period the U.S lost clean-energy

market share to foreign companies. The Apollo Project is well on its way to building the across-the-board commitment necessary to reestablishing leadership in these sectors and others. And labor and environmentalists, who have not always seen eye to eye on economic development issues, are Apollo's chief proponents.

"The loss of over one million jobs since 2001 combined with disregard of the environment in the name of economic growth has provided a strong impetus for a blue and green partnership," says Pat Wise, executive director of the WED. "Maintaining healthy urban environments in which families can thrive is a first-order priority for unions and green groups alike."

The American public echoes the sentiment. Over 70% of Americans polled by the Apollo Alliance enthusiastically support smart, sustainable growth projects that revitalize our urban centers and put Americans to work.

Like the original Apollo Project, the economic impacts of the plan ripple outward into a variety of sectors, but create high-paying good jobs with a green twist.

And by investing in energy technologies that reduce our dependence on foreign oil, the

Apollo Project will shore up homeland security and shield the U.S. from political instability in oil-producing regions.

The California Apollo Project is driving a public-private strategy to create jobs in California, where green investments stand a good chance of getting the green light. In February of this year, the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) approved a plan to invest \$200 million in the cutting edge environmental technology sector. Serving over 1.4 million public employees, retirees and their families, CalPERS is the largest public pension fund in the nation with assets totaling \$167 billion. This investment is a breakthrough promising job creation through environmental technology and public investment.

Says Pat Wise of WED, "Investments in clean energy create over four times as many jobs as tax cuts and huge public returns. It's up to labor, environmentalists and others who care about cities to realize the Apollo Project's full potential."