

Chairman Martin Heinrich
Opening Remarks for Hearing, “Growing the
Economy of the Future: Job Training for the Clean
Energy Transition”
September 20, 2023

This hearing will come to order.

I would like to welcome everyone to today’s Joint Economic Committee hearing, titled, “Growing the Economy of the Future: Job Training for the Clean Energy Transition”.

Today’s hearing will begin with five-minute opening statements from myself, Vice Chairman Schweikert, and each of our four witnesses.

We will then proceed to questions, alternating between parties in order of Member arrival.

Members are reminded to keep their questions to no more than five minutes.

Now, for opening statements.

In the last two years, the Biden administration and Democrats in Congress have taken significant action to advance a transition to a robust clean energy economy.

We made historic investments in clean energy in the Inflation Reduction Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

These investments have directly increased the demand for workers in a range of clean energy occupations.

Whether it's manufacturing workers building batteries, wind turbines or solar panels, or plumbers and pipefitters installing heat pumps, there are opportunities here for millions of Americans.

Looking at just a few of these jobs, the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that over the next decade we'll need to fill at least 735,000 job openings for electricians, 425,000 for plumbers and pipefitters, nearly 400,000 for HVAC mechanics, and 100,000 for utility line workers to meet demand.

And some estimates put the increased demand for workers even higher.

This demand for skilled trades people is a once in a generation opportunity to grow the middle class, if we can train enough workers to meet this demand.

These are careers people can build a family around, in their home communities, and they don't require a four-year college degree or the college debt that sometimes accompanies one.

These jobs feel a lot like my dad's career as an IBEW lineman.

His work keeping the lights on in our community was my family's ticket to the middle class.

It gave us economic stability, and it gave my parents security in their retirement.

Right now, we are unlocking that same pathway, that same ticket to the middle class, for even more families.

Our current workforce shortages are a real limiting factor in growing the advanced energy economy.

That's why we need to invest in proven career training pathways. We need to work collaboratively with labor unions, community colleges, and with private industry.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is investing \$72 million in programs to train folks for clean energy careers by partnering with existing institutions.

Community colleges – like Central New Mexico Community College – offer a range of workforce training programs and one-year certificates that get participants into careers quickly.

The Inflation Reduction Act also encouraged the use of Registered Apprentices.

These are programs that pay people to learn technical skills on the job and in the classroom, allowing employers to train and invest in their future employees.

By investing in programs that create opportunities and teach the skills necessary for this energy transition, we can ensure we meet workers where they are.

We're already seeing these investments produce results.

New Mexicans in these skilled trades have already built some of the largest clean energy projects in the entire nation and we are currently beginning construction on a regional transmission line and wind generation project larger than the Hoover Dam.

This one project will be the largest clean energy project ever built in the Western Hemisphere. This same project will also have substantial economic benefits in the Vice Chairman's state.

From wind towers to solar racking hardware to utility-scale solar trackers, we're also manufacturing the components to build out the energy transition.

And in order to continue to lead on this front, we need to invest at the federal level in more research and development.

We need to invest in national labs and universities that are making fundamental discoveries in challenging sectors like industrial heat and aviation.

Broadening our clean energy research and development will help strengthen our workforce.

It will help workers build skills needed for the clean energy transition.

And it will help us grow America's middle class while leading the world to a brighter, cleaner future.

I'm looking forward to hearing more today from our witnesses – including two from my home state of New

Mexico – on ways to support and diversify our rapidly growing clean energy workforce.

I'm eager to hear more about how we can better invest in educational and apprenticeship pathways to clean energy jobs, and how we can maintain American leadership in the industry.

I will now turn to Vice Chairman Schweikert for his opening statement.

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