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You're Fired: Trump's Energy Policies Could Put Americans Out of Work



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Takeaways

- If he wins a second term, Donald Trump plans to repeal key tax credits and grants that have helped create more than 334,000 high-quality, good-paying jobs and have the potential to result in millions more.
- Trump's energy policies would stunt industry wages and reduce job quality, making it more difficult for working-class Americans to achieve a stable, middle-class lifestyle.
- Trump's plan would disproportionately harm America's historically disadvantaged communities—including those with lower income levels, college graduation rates, and employment rates.

Over the past three years, the United States has made unprecedented investments in the nation's clean energy industries through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), and the CHIPS and Science Act. The Biden-Harris Administration has pushed the energy transition forward and made it work for working families, creating jobs in communities across the US.

To date, these legislative wins have produced more than 334,000 new clean energy jobs and could lead to a resounding 9 million over the next decade. Vice President Kamala Harris would protect and expand this job growth if elected president. Donald Trump doesn't see it that way. Instead of embracing the jobs that come with the energy transition, he's declared war on clean energy and spelled out a plan to roll back important clean energy provisions in Project 2025, a playbook for the second Trump administration written by former Trump officials and others with close ties to the former president.

If reelected, Trump will reverse the progress we've made and give American workers a bad deal. Here's what that looks like:

- **Trump will stunt one of the fastest growing sectors in the American economy**
- **Trump will reduce wages and job quality for workers**
- **Trump will directly undermine unions**

- Trump will destroy job training opportunities and leave behind Americans without college degrees
- Trump will kill jobs in parts of the country that need them the most

Trump Will Stunt One of The Fastest-Growing Sources of Jobs for Americans

Trump has long undermined the nation's clean energy sector, presumably in an effort to ingratiate himself with fossil fuel interests. As president, he falsely accused wind turbines of causing cancer and stifled approvals for developing renewables on federal lands. On the campaign trail, he has called for a "blood bath" against electric vehicles and said proponents of the technology should "rot in hell." And if reelected, Trump and his cadre of closest advisors have devised plans to wreak complete havoc on clean energy, with Project 2025 calling for complete repeal of BIL and IRA.

In so doing, they would—among other things—claw back federal investments for US manufacturing, scrap tax incentives for clean energy technologies, and restrict US companies' access to critical, low-cost loans.

By slashing these programs, Trump threatens to derail the development of one of the nation's fastest-growing sectors. In the first year after passage of the IRA, the clean energy sector added 114,000 new, high-quality jobs for electricians, mechanics, technicians, and more. In less than two years, this figure had already ballooned to more than 334,000, significantly outpacing the growth rate of the overall US workforce. Despite these eye-watering figures, Trump has continued his crusade against clean energy and pledged to take this burgeoning industry backwards, despite the risks for working Americans.

Trump Will Reduce Wages and Job Quality for Workers

Trump plans to cut taxes for the wealthy and large companies while eliminating IRA incentives that support working-class Americans. Specifically, he threatens to scrap the IRA's prevailing wage requirements, which incentivize employers to pay living wages and provide comprehensive benefits. As it currently stands, employers can collect up to five times the clean energy tax incentives for providing workers on federally supported projects with quality wages and fringe benefits such as "life insurance, health insurance, pension, vacation, holidays, sick leave, and supplemental unemployment benefits." Electric linemen in Pennsylvania, for instance, can earn in excess of \$80 per hour between prevailing hourly wages and fringe benefits.

Clean energy jobs have historically provided highly competitive incomes. Research from the Brookings Institution shows that this sector's average hourly wages exceed national averages by 8 to 19 percent. They also find that even at the lowest ends of the income spectrum, clean energy

workers “can earn \$5 to \$10 more per hour than other jobs,” meaning that entry-level employees can achieve a stable, middle-class lifestyle at a time when such opportunities are diminishingly rare. As such, Trump’s attacks on the clean energy industry will result in fewer good-paying jobs and benefits for working-class Americans.

Trump Will Directly Undermine Unions

Unions have long supported working-class Americans. On average, they raise their members’ wages by 10 to 15 percent—with particularly pronounced benefits for women and workers of color. They help workers secure stronger benefits—including health insurance, vacation time, and sick leave—and ensure greater job security, safer working conditions, and more predictable schedules. They also lift up the entire economy, with evidence showing that even wages at non-unionized companies increase as a result of greater nationwide unionization.

But as president, Donald Trump undermined public employee unions, supported “right to work policies” that drain unions’ resources, and weakened the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) by appointing anti-union representatives to the independent federal agency tasked with protecting workers’ rights.

If elected, Trump intends to take even more strident, anti-union actions in a second term. Project 2025 offers a step-by-step agenda for eviscerating the NLRB’s enforcement capacity. It also calls for scrapping Biden’s executive order that re-empowered federal workers, and it proposes reclassifying tens of thousands of unionized, career civil servants so that they can be more easily laid off and replaced with political lackeys. Trump would also torpedo pro-labor IRA and BIL provisions that prioritize awarding federal funds to projects with pro-labor arrangements. Trump could even seek to claw back funding to recently announced projects in states like Georgia, Michigan, and Pennsylvania to convert struggling auto plants into EV facilities with union labor.

Trump’s anti-union actions will be felt disproportionately in the energy sector, which has well-above-average unionization rates. The DOE reports that 11 percent of energy workers are unionized—50 percent above than the private sector average. For some energy subsectors, these rates are even higher: 19 percent of nuclear electric power generation workers are unionized, as are 18 percent of transmission, distribution, and storage workers. The IRA has supported unions and working-class families, making Trump’s plans to repeal the legislation a direct threat to labor in America.

Trump Will Destroy Job Training Opportunities and Leave Behind Americans Without College Degrees

Trump’s efforts to repeal the IRA will eliminate crucial job training opportunities that provide tens of thousands of Americans with pathways to prosperous, middle-class jobs. On the line are

programs like Solar Ready Vets, which offers career training for veterans to enter the solar industry. Trump's anti-IRA crusade would also eliminate clean energy tax incentives for employers who hire a designated percentage of apprentices.

Job training opportunities provide pathways for upward mobility. These benefits are particularly salient for Americans without college degrees. Research finds that between 50 and 75 percent of jobs expected to come out of the IRA won't require college degrees. Killing job training opportunities would also exacerbate workforce challenges in the rapidly growing clean energy space. Currently, the sector has a talent shortage due to an aging energy workforce and a growing demand for skilled workers. If the US hopes to meet its energy demands in the future, it will have to find ways to train up new workers in this space. The IRA has dramatically increased the number of energy workers; Trump's actions would have the opposite effect.

Trump Will Kill Jobs in Parts of the Country that Need Them the Most

Trump often speaks of standing with America's "forgotten men and women," but his energy policies would leave behind many of those same communities. For instance, Trump would scrap the IRA's tax credit bonus for investing in energy communities—places that have been historically contaminated with hazardous pollutants, that have derived certain percentages of employment or local tax revenue from fossil fuel extraction, or that have had a coal mine close in recent decades. Similarly, Trump would eliminate the IRA's incentive for clean energy investments in low-income communities or tribal land.

Current policies have been deliberately designed to benefit historically disadvantaged communities—including those with lower income levels, college graduation rates, and employment rates. But by scrapping these crucial provisions, Trump's self-defeating energy policy would stunt job creation in many parts of the country that need those opportunities the most.

Conclusion

The IRA and BIL have created hundreds of thousands of clean energy jobs and unlocked hundreds of billions of dollars in public and private investments. These legislative accomplishments have been a boon for the nation's workforce, creating record job growth, promoting high wages, supporting unions, providing pathways for job training, and fostering opportunities for America's most vulnerable communities. The effects of these policies have been felt nationwide—with some of the greatest benefits experienced in traditionally Republican states and counties.

That's the power of the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment to clean energy industrial strategy. It's not just reducing emissions—it's creating opportunity and improving quality of life. And that's what Vice President Kamala Harris has pledged to continue if elected to the presidency.

But Trump and his allies have consistently railed against the IRA and BIL and sought their repeal—the consequences of which would be enormously destructive. America’s workers deserve better. They deserve common-sense energy policies, high-quality, good-paying jobs, and a president who will protect and expand economic opportunity for working families.