

(Almost) Weekly Update to KFTC members and allies regarding Just Transition policies in the first 100 days of the Biden Administration
April 26, 2021

Upcoming events:

On April 28 at 12pm ET, we are co-hosting the RECLAIM Town Hall. Join us and Congressman Matt Cartwright of Pennsylvania to learn about how coal-impacted communities will benefit from the RECLAIM Act and Reauthorization of the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Fund, and have an opportunity to ask your questions about the bills.

[Register for the town hall here!](#)

The RECLAIM Act (HR 1733) commits \$1 billion to help clean up hazardous abandoned coal mines while also supporting projects that foster community and economic development. If passed, the RECLAIM Act will spur immediate job creation and create the conditions for longer-term, locally-driven economic development efforts to build better, brighter futures in coal communities across the country.

AML Fund Reauthorization (HR 1734) would continue to fund the program that reclaims abandoned coal mines permitted before 1977. The program is set to expire this year, and Congress must reauthorize it to continue funding abandoned mine land cleanup for another 15 years.

This RECLAIM Act Town Hall is sponsored by Eastern Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation, Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards (SAMS), Statewide Organizing for Community eMpowerment (SOCM), The Clinch Coalition, Kentuckians For The Commonwealth, Reimagine Appalachia, Appalachian Citizens' Law Center, Citizens Climate Lobby, Center for Coalfield Justice, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (OVEC), West Virginia Interfaith Power and Light, The Alliance For Appalachia, and Appalachian Voices!

IWG report update -

- Sets out a series of immediate next steps
- Work with other EJ initiatives
- Series of townhall meetings with Senior officials and community members - not details on what that looks like
- "Energy Community Advisory Group" for the administration
- Follow up report in 9-12 months with more concrete recommendations

- Next steps for us/feedback:
 - Public release - maybe try and coordinate some feedback on the plan.
 - They say they want to get money on the ground quickly. "Wins on the board" Asking for folks to send in short lists of local projects that are ready for funds.
 - Can we compile: ARC projects, AML projects unfunded, water projects in communities, etc.
 - Recommendations on stakeholder engagement process. They have created lots of disgruntled folks due to lack of process.
 - Aren't thinking about the American Jobs Plan/Infrastructure package and how it fits in
- Did they mention budget requests?
 - They listed 60-65 programs that could be used for transition. They narrowed in on 30 or so for focus on this. We can expect a list of programs, but not numbers for those programs.
 - They were surprised to find there is no support for dislocated workers in these communities.

The Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities and Economic Revitalization has just released their first report, linked here and entitled: [Initial Report to the President on Empowering Workers Through Revitalizing Energy Communities](#).

A few summary bullet points:

- The report identifies 25 priority Energy Communities for immediate deployment of federal resources based on the number of direct coal-related jobs as a percentage of the total number of jobs in those areas.
 - Coal counties in WV, VA, KY, OH, PA, ND, WY, CO, UT, AZ, NM, IL, IN, CA, TX, and AK based on Bureau of Labor Statistics data.
- The report outlines (1) "Immediate Action"; and (2) "Near-term Goals".
 - (1) Immediate Action
 - Essentially a list of existing federal agency grants and incentives programs, many of which LNS has identified, that should be immediately directed toward the 25 priority Energy Communities.
 - According to the report, there are at least 60 federal programs amounting to \$39.7 billion ready to be deployed in "infrastructure, environmental remediation, union job creation, and community revitalization efforts."
 - **The report as a whole (along with available info on Biden's American Jobs Plan) makes it seem likely that the "immediate jobs" steps will focus heavily on abandoned mine reclamation, environmental remediation, and certain infrastructure projects, especially broadband internet.*
 - (2) Near-term Goals (and long-term it seems)
 - Institute a staff and regular meetings for the Interagency Working Group and begin coordinating the group's activities with other interagency initiatives (EJ, Justice40, Buy America, rural initiatives).
 - Create a Community Engagement Subcommittee that will

- *within 3 months*, kickoff a Listening Tour for a WH official (perhaps Gina McCarthy or Brian Deese) to visit each of the 25 priority Energy Communities and host town hall meetings there with community orgs and stakeholders
 - establish a Federal Advisory Committee for long-term feedback
 - Create an Investment Subcommittee that will
 - compile a list of project proposals (*presumably already existing?*) from Energy Community stakeholders and identify appropriate federal programs that can be matched to those project proposals for funding/assistance.
 - evaluate American Jobs Plan, BBB, and federal budget proposals that can be further deployed in like manner
 - Create an Integration Subcommittee that will
 - *within 3 months*, review previous interagency integration models (e.g. the POWER Initiative) and then recommend a model to implement this new integrated push
 - test pilot runs to coordinate this integrated model on a region by region basis (likely based on the existing structure of Commerce Dept (EDA) regional economic development planning summits)
 - convene regional summits where select community development orgs bring community members to discuss 3 to 5 projects that EDA will then coalesce federal resources to match up with
 - *within 1 year*, have a fully integrated One-Stop Shop for Energy Communities
 - Create a Policy Subcommittee that will
 - *within 6 months*, submit recommendations to McCarthy and Deese based on lessons learned from the above steps to shape long-term policy & investment in Energy Communities
 - *by end of 2021*, report a final set of recommendations to President Biden for policy & investment in Energy Communities
 - *within 1 year*, prepare a report (w/ Energy Dept's energy tech lab) analyzing
 - data regarding Energy Communities' local assets that may be used in economic development, local infrastructure needs, and the training needs of displaced workers
 - data regarding "indirect" job needs (i.e. jobs that support and are derivative of energy jobs, including jobs from State/local government energy tax revenue)
 - data regarding poverty, Median Area Income, health, educational attainment, and incarceration rates
 - data regarding cumulative air/water/climate pollution and community resilience to these things

*Additionally, [Brian Anderson](#) has been named the Executive Director of the Interagency Working Group. According to the WH, he is "a longtime resident of West Virginia and a descendant of coal miners, Anderson serves as director of [Energy Dept's] National Energy Technology Laboratory with facilities in Morgantown, West Virginia, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Albany, Oregon, and is a renowned scientist with extensive expertise in technology development for carbon management in hard-to-decarbonize sectors." It seems he is basically America's lead fossil fuel energy and technology researcher.

*Also note that, aside from infrastructure projects and coal mine reclamation, a core part of this report (and nearly the entirety of the Energy Dept's immediate role) seems to be centered around CCS for existing power plants and metals manufacturing, and also green hydrogen. And while acknowledging that this is just an initial report, the document also doesn't mention any labor standards for businesses that will use these federal programs to implement these infrastructure and remediation jobs. Nor does it mention certain other necessary elements of a true JT (like wage-replacement for dislocated workers.) It also doesn't outline the parameters businesses will need to meet to access the various federal program resources, but my initial impression is that it doesn't right now depart from the traditional framework of tax incentives and lowered capital costs to "credit-worthy" (read: large and/or investor-backed) businesses. (Perhaps we should anticipate seeing many public-private partnerships on the horizon.)

Here is a White House fact sheet on this report's proposals and how the subsequent American Jobs Plan proposals will further along the stated transition goals : [WH Fact Sheet](#)

And here is a Department of Energy summary of their contribution to the plans: [DOE summary](#)

[Here is a social media toolkit from the RECLAIM Coalition about the Inter-Agency Working Group report:](#)

E&C Announces Legislative Hearing on Environmental Justice Bills and the CLEAN Future Act

Washington, D.C. – Energy and Commerce Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) and Environment and Climate Change Subcommittee Chairman Paul Tonko (D-NY) announced today that the Environment and Climate Change Subcommittee will hold a fully remote legislative hearing on **Thursday, April 15, at 10:30 a.m. (EDT)** on several environmental justice proposals, including the provisions within the Climate Leadership and Environmental Action for our Nation's (CLEAN) Future Act. The hearing is entitled, "The CLEAN Future Act and Environmental Justice: Protecting Frontline Communities."

"It is a sad but inescapable fact that where you live in this country often determines the extent of the environmental health risks you face. Whether it be air pollution, waste disposal sites, or clean drinking water violations, frontline communities are repeatedly exposed to the worst health hazards, and climate change is only making matters worse," Pallone and Tonko said. **"We look forward to discussing how environmental justice provisions strengthen the CLEAN Future Act, give frontline communities a much-needed seat at the table, and ensure a clean future for everyone – regardless of zip code."**

This hearing will be conducted remotely via Cisco Webex video conferencing. Members of the public may view the hearing via live webcast accessible on the Energy and Commerce Committee's website. Please note the webcast will not be available until the hearing begins.

Information for this hearing, including the Committee Memorandum, the legislation to be discussed, witness list, testimony and a live webcast will be posted [HERE](#) as they become available.

Recent reports:

- a) **Just Transition Listening Project, Labor Network for Sustainability**
- b) [Fossil Fuel Racism](#)

(Almost) Weekly Update to KFTC members and allies regarding Just Transition policies in the first 100 days of the Biden Administration

April 1, 2021

Hold onto your hat: It's infrastructure week, April fools, and Earth-Day-Week-Month! This week's update focuses only on the first of those items: infrastructure! By next week we'll get caught up on the many, many important climate policies that are being rolled out this month.

1) THRIVE Act sets the tone, pace, scale of what's needed for a Just Transition

On Monday, March 29, Senator Ed Markey, Rep. Debbie Dingle, and other members of Congress stood with many environmental justice, climate justice, and labor organizations to launch the THRIVE Act. This legislation will officially be filed in Congress later in April.

As KFTC chairperson Cassia Herron explained in a virtual town hall event on March 31, "The Thrive Act calls for a 10 year, \$10 trillion investment in a Just Transition, creating 15 million good jobs by addressing the climate crisis and investing in the care economy. It is literally our chance to transition our economy. It calls for 50% of investments to be made in historically underserved and overburdened communities. It requires new jobs to meet or exceed high labor and equity standards, and for the federal government to respect for Tribal sovereignty."

An analysis from economists at the University of Massachusetts shows the Act would create 129,000 new jobs in Kentucky in the first year, and sustain those jobs for the next decade.

Resources to review and share about the THRIVE Act:

[1-page summary of the THRIVE Act](#)

[Section-by-section summary of the THRIVE Act](#)

[Kentucky Specific Jobs analysis of the THRIVE Act](#)

[Talking points about a KY-specific jobs analysis of the THRIVE Act](#)

- 2) KFTC and allies hosted Our Time to Thrive: a Town Hall Meeting on Just Transition and Climate Justice in Kentucky**

On March 31, KFTC hosted a rich discussion featuring dynamic Kentuckians who are already leading the way to shape a Just Transition in their communities and in our state.

The conversation was then joined by Congressman John Yarmuth, who represents Louisville and serves as chairman of the House Budget Committee. Together with KFTC chairperson Cassia Herron and Lexington KFTC member Chris Woolery, he shared perspectives on the American Rescue Plan, the For The People Act, the Thrive Act, and the opportunity to transform rural communities by investing in rural electric cooperatives.

It was an inspiring conversation from start to finish. We're grateful to everyone who participated and tuned in!

KFTC will edit the 1.5 hour discussion into pieces so we can share widely. In the meantime, [the whole thing is well worth watching!](#)

3) President Biden proposes a \$2.25 trillion American Jobs Plan

On March 31, President Biden unveiled his American Jobs Plan - part of his Build Back Better Agenda - at an event in Pittsburgh. He called on Congress to invest in upgrades to US infrastructure and the care economy, to the tune of \$2.25 trillion over the next 8 years.

What's in it?

Whitehouse Fact Sheet

9-page analysis of the American Jobs Plan from Congressional Progressive Action Fund.

Some headlines:

- \$621 billion transportation infrastructure
- \$400 billion home- and community-based care
- \$300 billion manufacturing and small business
- \$213 billion housing (build, preserve, and retrofit 2 million homes)
- \$180 billion R&D
- \$111 billion drinking water
- \$100 billion broadband
- \$100 billion power infrastructure
- \$100 billion upgrade and build public schools
- \$100 billion workforce development
- \$25 billion child care facilities
- \$18 billion VA facilities
- \$12 billion community colleges
- \$10 billion federal buildings
- \$2 trillion in revenue (focused on corporate side)

- Calls for the PRO Act, prevailing wage, labor protections, local hire, registered apprenticeships, Buy America, and increased penalties for workplace safety and health violations.

A few details about what's in the plan:

Biden's Jobs plan includes \$16 billion for reclamation of abandoned mine lands and clean up and closure of orphan oil and gas wells. There are not yet details available about how the funds would be allocated across those different programs. For comparison, the RECLAIM Act calls for \$1 billion in existing Abandoned Mine Lands funds to be appropriated over a five year period, and a new Environmental Justice Legacy Pollution Act from Sen. Corey Booker calls for \$10 billion to be spent from the general treasury on mine lands reclamation.

It includes \$111 billion for drinking water infrastructure! That is being touted as enough to replace all lead drinking water pipes in the country and make substantial upgrades to America's waste water, drinking water, and stormwater systems.

It supports a transition to a 100% carbon free electric grid by 2035 by establishing: a ten year extension of renewable energy tax credits; block grants to help local governments and tribes invest in clean energy, worker transition, and environmental justice projects; an "Energy Efficiency and Clean Energy Standard" or EECES; electrifying the federal vehicle fleet; purchasing 100% clean energy to power federal buildings, and more.

It invests \$213 billion to build or retrofit affordable and sustainable housing and calls for the elimination of exclusionary zoning laws, which are used by wealthier communities to protect their property values and exclusive access to other benefits (like wealthier schools and parks) by preventing the development of multi-family units and other forms of affordable housing.

Analysis: How good is it? How big is it? How does it stack up with the THRIVE Act?

There is early consensus among progressive groups that there is a lot to like in the American Jobs Plan (major investments in climate and care economies with strong labor , equity and environmental standards) - - that it's not enough - - and that there are some devilish details.

The Energy Efficiency and Clean Energy Standard (EECES) could be a transformative federal policy, and it's complicated. The broad strokes of this policy are similar in many ways to the Clean Energy Opportunity Act that KFTC and our allies pushed in the Kentucky General Assembly for more than a decade. It would require electric utilities to source a greater and greater share of their power from energy efficiency and clean energy sources. HOWEVER, the devil(s) are, of course, in the details. Many climate justice groups and climate champions in Congress are already gearing up for significant fights over how this policy will define "clean" energy. Will waste incineration count? Will biomass, and if so what kinds? Will nuclear energy? Will the bill extend the life of natural gas by driving the use of hydrogen fuel derived from gas?

Will coal and gas industries carve out a future for themselves in this policy by securing hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars for carbon capture and sequestration schemes?

Speaking of devils and details, the Biden proposal calls for dozens of massive, industrial scale new facilities to be built in distressed communities. For example, it envisions 15 “decarbonized hydrogen demonstration projects,” “ten pioneer facilities to demonstrate carbon capture retrofits for large steel, cement, and chemical production facilities” and support for “large scale sequestration efforts,” including retrofits of existing power plants and industrial applications. The language used by the Whitehouse cheerfully adds, “all while ensuring that overburdened communities are protected from cumulative pollution.”

These kinds of massive new investments in industrial-scale projects could undermine the President’s executive order that 40% of federal investments to address climate change must benefit historically overburdened and underserved communities. (If a bazillion dollars are spent on risky, expensive, and potentially harmful projects in distressed communities, does that count as a “benefit”?)

Here are some ways to evaluate the size of Biden’s Jobs plan, compared to the THRIVE Act (This analysis is from the Congressional Progressive Action Fund):

- **Overall scale:** The Biden plan is less than $\frac{1}{3}$ the scale of investment called for by the THRIVE Act. It invests \$2.25 Trillion over eight years, while THRIVE calls for \$10 trillion over ten years.
- **Jobs:** Biden’s proposal would create about 5 million jobs, less than a third of the jobs that THRIVE would create.
- **Energy:** Biden’s plan invests \$69B. The official factsheet is missing dollar amounts for a couple of line items, which could affect the total amount for energy investments. But based on what appears to be the total for this sector, this proposal would cover just 2% of the THRIVE investment in clean energy, leaving an annual gap of \$274B and 3.1 million jobs, due to very low investments in the electric grid and renewable energy expansion.
- **Transportation:** Biden’s plan invests \$621B. This is 32% of the THRIVE amount, leaving an annual gap of \$115B and 1.9 million jobs, due to low investments in surface transportation, electric vehicles, and rail.
- **Buildings:** Biden’s plan invests 378B (though some items did not have \$ amounts). This is 40% of the THRIVE amount, leaving an annual gap of \$47B and over 785,000 jobs, due to low investments in public housing and schools.
- **Lands:** Biden’s plan invests \$31B. This is 12% of the THRIVE amount, leaving an annual gap of \$22B and nearly 350,000 jobs, due to low investments in plugging orphaned oil and gas wells and Brownfield and Superfund cleanup.
- **Agriculture:** There are virtually no investments in agriculture in Biden’s proposal.
- **Water:** Biden’s plan invests \$111B. This is 34% of the THRIVE amount, leaving an annual gap of \$18B and nearly 270,000 jobs.
- **Broadband:** Biden’s plan invests \$100B. This is 29% of the THRIVE amount, leaving an annual gap of \$23B and over 225,000 jobs.

- **Care:** Biden's plan invests \$400B. This is 52% of the THRIVE amount, leaving an annual gap of \$28B and over 785,000 jobs.
- **Several sectors in the proposal would receive more investments than in THRIVE,** or were not included in THRIVE. Those include: Manufacturing, R&D, Resilience, and Workforce Development.

4) Next up: What's the process for moving an infrastructure bill in Congress?

The American Jobs Act is only part one. In April, the President will also lay out The American Families Plan as part two of his Build Back Better agenda. That plan will call for investments in health care, paid leave, child care, education, working family tax credits, and taxes on the wealthy. It is not clear (to me) if Congressional leaders intend to fold both proposals into one giant bill. But I think so.

It's also not clear yet if Congressional leaders will try to move some pieces of the President's plan forward using "normal order," in which case they would need to get 60 votes in the Senate. It's likely that many, most, and perhaps all of the pieces will get rolled together into one bill that is passed using budget reconciliation rules. In that case, the bill could pass the Senate with only 50 votes + the Vice President. However, as we saw with the minimum wage fight in January, using the reconciliation pathway makes it difficult to include policies that are not narrowly tied to federal spending or tax rules.

Speaker Pelosi wants the American JOBS plan to pass the House by July 4th, a VERY swift timeline. We can expect hearings to begin in the House when Congress returns in mid-April, and committee markups in May. If the House moves that fast, then the next hurdle will be to move the package through the Senate before their August recess or early fall.

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1. Join a “Our Time To Thrive,” a virtual Town Hall Meeting, March 31, 7 pm ET / 6 pm CT

Please join “Our Time to Thrive,” a virtual Town Hall meeting about ways to advance a Just Transition and Climate Justice in Kentucky. This event will be broadcast live on KFTC’s FB page on Wednesday March 31 at 7 pm ET / 6 pm CT.

We’ll share inspiring stories about ways Kentuckians are already working to shape a Just Transition. And we’ll discuss actions Congress must take to **create and sustain millions of meaningful jobs, including 129,000 jobs in Kentucky**, while advancing racial justice and protecting our health and climate.

This event is part of a national day of action demonstrating public support for the THRIVE agenda and other Just Transition bills. Help spread the word by sharing this link with your networks!

2. The THRIVE Act is (almost) here!

This transformational economic recovery package puts over 15 million people to work in family-sustaining, union jobs across the economy — from care work to manufacturing— to cut climate pollution in half by 2030 and advance gender, environmental, Indigenous, economic and racial justice, with particular attention to Black and Indigenous people.

Similar to how the Breathe Act was introduced, it will be launched by movement organizations and legislative champions supporting the bill. A press conference announcing the legislation will take place at noon on Monday March 29. Then members of Congress will be encouraged to sign onto the bill, which will be formally introduced in mid-April. Current legislative sponsors include: Sens. Ed Markey and Jeff Merkley, and Reps. Debbie Dingell, Ilhan Omar, Jamaal Bowman, Pramila Jayapal, Earl Blumenauer, Ro Khanna, Yvette Clarke, and Nanette Barragán.

Resources to review and share about the THRIVE Act:

1-page summary of the THRIVE Act

Section-by-section summary of the THRIVE Act

Kentucky Specific Jobs analysis of the THRIVE Act (This report is not public until March 31)

Talking points about a KY-specific jobs analysis of the THRIVE Act (Not public until March 31)

A slide deck with the topline for the THRIVE Act

Indivisible explainer video about the THRIVE Agenda’s 8 pillars

3. A strategy to pass a “Build Back Better” Infrastructure Plan(s) is emerging

President Biden will give a big speech on Wednesday, March 31st about his Build Back Better Infrastructure plan. But the strategy for crafting and moving that plan is still evolving. We're learning that the Administration may ask Congress to pass two big pieces of the plan this spring: WRDA (Water Resources Development Authoriation) and the FAST Act (Fix Amercia's Surface Transporation). The assumption may be that they can get 60 votes in the Senate for these traditional infrastructure packages.

Then we are hearing that Congressional committees will get to work crafting an additional, massive infrastructure, climate, and just transition package over the summer. This bill could have 6 and possibly seven sections, addressing: Clean Grid, Efficient Buildings, Sustainable Agriculture, Clean Transit, Workers and Community Transition, Clean Industry, and possibly a section on Oceans. This bill is unlikely to get GOP support in the Senate and would need to pass using the reconciliation process, which limits the bill to items that involve federal spending and taxes, rather than new rules or policies.

4. The RECLAIM Act got a hearing last week in the House Natural Resources Committee!

The RECLAIM Act (HR 1733) and a bill to reauthorize the Abandoned Mine Lands Program (HR 1734) were both heard last week in the House Natural Resources Committee. KFTC and our allies in the region are using this moment to demonstrate public support and push members of Congress to act swiftly on these bills, which would create thousands of good jobs while restoring damaged land and polluted waterways.

Actions you can take:

Call 1-888-464-1997 to hear a script and be connected directly with your Representative to urge them to pass legislation to reclaim Abandoned Mine Lands.

Text RECLAIM to 69866 you will get a text back with the call in number to reach members of Congress.

Be on the lookout for information about a Townhall Meeting about the RECLAIM Act in April being planned by ally organizations in Southwest Virginia.

5. In addition, KFTC has recently endorsed legislation that will soon be offered by Sen. Cory Booker and Rep. McEachin called the Environmental Justice Legacy Pollution Cleanup Act.

Funding will go toward:

- Abandoned mine land reclamation (\$10 billion)
- Abandoned hard rock mine reclamation (\$10 billion)
- Cleaning up sites on the EPA Superfund National Priorities List (\$10 billion)
- Cleaning up brownfield sites (\$3 billion)
- Cleaning up Formerly Used Defense Sites (\$10 billion)
- Replacing diesel school buses in disadvantaged school districts (\$30 billion)

- Urban tree planting in low-income communities (\$25 billion)
- Remediation of lead-based paint hazards in housing (\$30 billion)
- Addressing lead paint, mold, and poor ventilation in the homes of tribal communities (\$1 billion)
- Replacing Lead Service Lines (\$30 billion)
- USDA's Rural Decentralized Water Systems Program (\$10 billion)
- The Indian Health Service for safe drinking water and sewage systems (\$3 billion)
- Addressing combined sewer overflows (\$25 billion)

6. April will be a HUGE month for Congressional proposals (good, bad and ugly) to address the climate crisis and advance Just Transition

April is Earth-Day-Week-Month, as former KFTC chairperson Teri Blanton is fond of saying. And we expect it to deliver a flood of new Congressional proposals to address the climate crisis and support a just transition. Some will be transformational, and others will be rooted in false solutions and market-based schemes that have already demonstrated do not reduce pollution in most impacted communities.

KFTC is engaged with our allies in the Climate Justice Alliance, national RECLAIM coalition, and other groups to push for the solutions our communities need and deserve. We'll do our best to keep Kentuckians well informed about ways to center racial equity and economic justice and make our voices heard in these debates.

7. Campaign to transform Rural Electric Co-ops and Communities is advancing

KFTC is part of a new coalition, the Rural Power Coalition, working to advance policies to transform rural electric cooperatives and their communities by speeding the retirement of fossil generation and investing in energy efficiency, renewable energy, broad band, and straight-up bill relief in their service territories.

In the last week alone KFTC, Mountain Association, and members of this coalition have had direct meetings with:

- The head of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and several members of their governance staff and board committee
- Staff of members of Congress who are drafting an exciting legislative proposal
- A newly re-formed "stakeholder group" with key staff leaders of East Kentucky Rural Co-op (EKPC) and staff from many of their 16 distribution co-ops, plus a number of clean energy allies, the KY Chamber, and various state agencies.

8. The EMPOWER KENTUCKY PLAN lives!

Back in 2015-2017, KFTC members worked for 18 months to listen, research, analyze and write a People's Energy Plan for Kentucky, one that could create more jobs than the status quo, lower

average energy bills compared to doing nothing, AND exceed the Obama Administration's requirement to slash CO2 pollution from our electric power sector.

We released the [Empower Kentucky Plan](#), including an [Environmental Justice Analysis of Kentucky](#), in April 2017, 3 months after the inauguration of the 45th President. In other words, it was a seed that landed in the desert.

But in this week alone, we've been engaged by a) staff in the KY Division of Water and b) staff in the Biden White House about ways that the Empower Kentucky Plan can inform policies that prioritize environmental justice and equity. In both calls, they quoted the Empower Kentucky plan back to us, and had specific questions about implementation of key recommendations.

If there's one thing you take away from this entire weekly report, I hope it's a sense of pride and hope, knowing that your ideas and hard work are being heard.

9. Some great recent national reports and videos about Just Transition

New Report: [Just Transition Listening Project by Labor Network for Sustainability](#)

[A great profile of Stanley Sturgill](#), a KFTC member and retired mine inspector from Lynch KY, was posted on the website of Repairers of the Breach, one of the key organizations supporting the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for a Moral Revival.

**Update to KFTC members and allies regarding Just Transition policies in the first 100 days
Most recent update March 17, 2021**

- 1) The American Rescue Plan passed Congress on March 10 and was signed by President Biden. This bill was shepherded through Congress by Congressman John Yarmuth of Louisville, who serves as Budget Chair and by Senator Bernie Sanders who is his counterpart in the Senate. It's an extraordinary bill in many ways, and represents a sea change in the politics and policies that have shredded America's social safety-net over the past 40 years.

Here are a few good articles: [VOX](#) overview, [NYT](#) overview, [NYT](#) details, [VOX](#) health care provisions, [Ky Policy Overview](#).

Also, it's important to understand how Republican state lawmakers are working to pass a budget that violates the new federal law by giving tax breaks instead of using the federal dollars to help Kentuckians. They've also tied the hands of Governor Beshear to direct the use of federal aid funds. [KY Policy has the goods](#).

RELATED ACTION:

Tune in tonight, March 17 at 8 pm for a live stream about the American Rescue Plan and how it will help Kentucky. This event is hosted by the Louisville Democratic Party with Congressman John Yarmuth, Jason Bailey, Reps Stevenson and Hatton, and Councilman Bill Hollander. [Click here to set a reminder to watch the live stream at 8 pm.](#)

2) The RECLAIM Act (HR 1733) and another bill to reauthorize the Abandoned Mine Lands Program (HR 1734) were introduced by Rep. Cartright in the US House on March 10.

These bills will be heard in the Natural Resources Committee at noon ET on Thursday March 18!

If you want to learn more, here are links to a zoom webinar about these bills: [This link has the chat record alongside the video](#); this is the [facebook link](#) to the video; the slideshow [is here](#).

RELATED ACTIONS:

Letter Writing Workshops about reclaiming abandoned mine lands on March 18th & 20th: reach out to austin@appvoices.org or [register here](#).

Watch the hearing on Thursday, March 18th at Noon ET in the House Natural Resources Committee. You can watch it live on [Facebook](#) or [YouTube](#). Testimony will be heard on the importance of reclaiming Abandoned Mine Lands. Follow the #RECLAIMact or #ReAuthorizeAML on Twitter or Facebook to amplify!

Call 1-888-464-1997 to hear a script and be connected directly with your Representative to urge them to pass legislation to reclaim Abandoned Mine Lands.

Text RECLAIM to 69866 you will get a text back with the call in number to reach members of Congress.

3) The THRIVE Agenda is gaining momentum

On March 17, the Green New Deal Network hosted a kickoff event in support of the THRIVE Agenda. [Watch it here!](#)

KFTC and a number of key allies are planning our own town hall meeting about what the THRIVE agenda could mean for Kentucky on March 31 at 7 pm ET. Stay tuned for more info!

In KY, a number of organizations working to advance a Just Transition and the THRIVE agenda are holding our first coalition meeting today! KFTC, Hood to the Holler, Sunrise leaders in Kentucky, Rubbertown Emergency Action Coalition (REACT) and IUE-CWA will discuss ways we want to organize and move together in 2021 and beyond, including ways to involve more organizations and grassroots community leaders in building power for solutions to address climate, economic, and racial justice.

4) The Clean Futures Act

This is an impressive, important, and problematic bill that aims to shape a transition to a zero carbon emissions energy system while supporting worker and community transition. It will be heard tomorrow in the US House Energy and Commerce Committee tomorrow, March 18.

Many of our allies, including the Indigenous Environmental Network and Climate Justice Alliance are circulating a sign-on letter to members of Congress, alerting them that the bill is not strong enough and may accelerate investments in false solutions, including biomass, waste incineration, nuclear power, and carbon capture and sequestration schemes. KFTC didn't receive the letter with enough time for us to consider and sign on, but we'll continue to raise our voices for the climate and Just Transition solutions we need and against forms of energy that perpetuate harm.

5) KFTC and our allies are involved in many conversations with the Biden Administration about climate and environmental justice and just transition.

In the past week alone:

Allies at Appalachian Citizens Law Center met with a Biden Inter-Agency Working Group focused on ways to support Just Transition for coal and power plant communities and shared a sign-on letter signed by KFTC and dozens of other groups about policies and actions needed to address the rising problem of coal bankruptcies and abandoned mine lands.

Allies with the Rural Power Coalition (which KFTC is a member of) met with Dr. Shalanda Baker, who is newly appointed as Deputy Director for Energy Justice at the US Department of Energy to discuss ways that our agenda to transform rural electric cooperatives can align with the Administration's goals.

Meanwhile allies with the United Front Line Table (which KFTC is a member of) also met with Dr. Baker, and have agreed to convene a series of quarterly meetings so that organizations on the frontlines of environmental and climate justice struggles can inform the Biden Administration's implementation of an ambitious goal - which was named in an Executive Order in early January - that 40% of federal climate investments must benefit disadvantaged communities and communities most affected by environmental pollution. This objective is being referred to as the EJ40 rule (for Environmental Justice 40%).

KFTC and many other grassroots organizations have also recently been invited to engage with Dr. Cecilia Martinez, who is serving as Senior Director for Environmental Justice at the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), to discuss similar questions about how best to implement that part of Biden's Executive Order.

6) The Rural Power Coalition is making waves as we demand transformative policies to benefit rural electric cooperatives, their member-owners and communities, workers, and the climate.

KFTC is an active participant in the Rural Power Coalition, which issued a sign-on letter in February demanding seven ways Congress should support a Just Transition to clean energy for Rural Electric Cooperatives and the communities they serve.

Since then, we have been actively engaged with several members of Congress who have agreed to draft legislation focused on the biggest piece of our agenda: \$100 billion in debt relief for rural co-ops in exchange for retiring coal and gas plants and investing in bill relief for customers, energy efficiency programs, renewable energy and storage, or rural broadband infrastructure. Stay tuned!

Update to KFTC members and allies regarding Just Transition policies in first 100 days
Most recent update, March 9, 2021

1. COVID Relief bill passes the Senate!

On Saturday, March 6, the US Senate passed a \$1.9 Trillion COVID relief bill after intense negotiations and a marathon session to address proposed amendments. The version of the bill passed by the Senate closely resembles the bill proposed by President Biden and passed by the US House, with the notable exception that it does not include an increase in the federal minimum wage. The Senate bill is now being proof-read and cleaned up before being sent to the House for a final vote, which is expected to happen on Wednesday, March 10th.

The historic bill includes the following important provisions (among many others):

Child credit of up to \$3,600 per young child: The bill contains a fully refundable tax credit of up to \$3,600 per child for children up to 6 years old and \$3,000 for children between 6 and 17. In 2021, this credit would be paid to families on a monthly basis, beginning in the summer. The current federal tax code contains a child credit of \$2,000. However, many low-income families - including half of all Black and Latino children and half of all rural children - do not receive the full credit because their families earn too little. The House proposal makes the full amount available to all but the very highest income families. In Kentucky, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that 421,000 children under the age of 17 are not eligible for the full \$2,000 credit, and would benefit under the new proposal.

Expands the Earned Income Tax Credit for low-paid adults who are not raising children in their home. The House plan triples from \$530 to \$1,500 the Earned Income Tax Credit for eligible low-paid workers who are not raising children. This provision affects workers earning less than \$21,000 a year. It also expands eligibility to adults aged 19-24 who are not full time students, and workers over the age of 65.

\$1,400 Survival Checks. The House plan sends survival checks worth \$1,400 to individuals who make up to \$75,000 a year or who earn less than \$150,000 as a couple. This one-time payment doesn't go far enough to help people keep shelter over their heads and food on their tables. But it is an important acknowledgement from the federal government that one of the most effective ways to help people facing economic hardship is to provide direct cash assistance without strings.

Unemployment Insurance. The Senate plan extends \$300 a week in federal unemployment benefits through early September 2021. This is down from \$600 a week in the first COVID relief bill passed in May 2020. But current federal unemployment benefits are set to expire March 14, 2021.

Immigrant Inclusion in Survival Checks. The plan includes survival checks for some mixed status families, so families with 2.2 million U.S. citizen children can get relief, even if the parents are not documented. However, 9.3 million immigrant taxpayers with Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers, including millions of essential workers, continue to be left out of survival checks, yet again.

Federal Aid to State and Local Governments: The package includes \$350 billion in federal aid to state and local governments to help shore up the budgets of those governments and prevent layoffs of public workers. Kentucky has already seen a significant decline in public jobs due to the pandemic. A new analysis by the Washington Post shows that state government jobs in Kentucky declined by 12 percent in 2020. As new federal funds begin to flow to states, counties and cities, Kentuckians will need be organized and relentless in demanding that these resources be invested in ways that benefit our communities, address inequality, and repair harm.

Expansion of health care to millions of Americans: The package increases the size of federal health care subsidies available to people who currently qualify (folks earning between 100 and 400 percent of the federal poverty limit) under the Affordable Care Act. And it makes federal subsidies available for the first time to 2.6 million people who currently make too much money to qualify but still can't afford premiums.

2. Rural Power Coalition advances demand for \$100 billion in debt relief for rural coops in return for investments in bill relief for customers and clean energy investments

This is a BIG moment for KFTC and our allies working to transform rural electric cooperatives.

Together with allies in the Rural Power Coalition, we delivered a letter to Congress, signed by 100 other organizations across the US, describing a 7-point platform for rural co-op reform. We've engaged key members in the US House and Senate about this broad agenda. And we are discussing with members of Congress a bill to retire \$100 billion in co-op debt in exchange for retiring old coal plants and reinvesting in bill relief, energy efficiency, renewable energy, and other programs to benefit local jobs, residents, businesses, and the environment. We recently got some great press about this campaign.

3. The RECLAIM Act and reauthorization of Abandoned Mine Lands program are on the move in the US House.

KFTC members and our allies have been pushing for Congress to invest \$1 billion in a program to clean up abandoned mine lands and polluted waterways since 2015. Last year the RECLAIM Act passed the US House, but went nowhere in the Senate when it was controlled by Kentucky Senator Mitch McConnell. This year, it's urgent that Congress pass the RECLAIM Act AND legislation to reauthorize the Abandoned Mine Lands Program, which is set to sunset at the end of the year unless action is taken. These important bills are once again moving in the US House!

Here are upcoming dates to keep in mind:

- March 9: These bills are likely to be introduced (today) in the House and Senate.
- March 16 at 6 pm: A national webinar for grassroots supporters to learn more about the RECLAIM Act and AML re-authorization, and discuss strategy ideas. [Register here!](#)
- March 18: A hearing on these bills in the US House Natural Resources Committee
- March 29: A national online spokesperson training for grassroots supporters of these bills who are willing to serve as media spokespeople. Registration link coming soon.

4. Update on the THRIVE Act, legislation coming out of the Green New Deal National Network The THRIVE Agenda is a broad, intersectional agenda to address racial justice, job creation and economic justice, and climate justice. It has been developed by and is being advanced by the Green New Deal National network and champions in Congress.

In March, we expect a bill to be filled under the banner of the THRIVE Act, which will call for a trillion dollars of annual investments in programs and strategies to drive a just transition. The bill is expected to include labor, racial justice and environmental justice standards for those investments.

This week the Sierra Club and Green New Deal Network released a Jobs Report detailing how the THRIVE Agenda would create 15 million good new jobs while countering systemic racism, supporting public health, and cutting climate pollution nearly in half by 2030. The report uses

new data from the Political Economy Research Institute to project the quantity, quality, and demographic distribution of jobs- broken down by race, gender, wages, benefits, union density, and sector.

- Social media toolkit with sample tweets, FB posts, etc.
- Unbranded graphics that spotlight the topline jobs numbers
- Talking points with additional fodder for tweets/posts

As part of a national day and week of action, KFTC members are beginning to plan and reach out to allies about a virtual town hall meeting on March 31st to lift up the urgent need for policies like the THRIVE Agenda. Be in touch with lisa@kftc.org if you want to be part of the planning team, and look for more info coming soon.

5. Biden Administration's "Inter-agency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities and Economic Revitalization" begins work

As part of an expansive Executive Order on the Climate Crisis issued in late January, President Biden established an Inter-agency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities.

He has charged this group with identifying ways federal resources can be directed to "revitalize the local economies of coal, oil, and gas and power plant communities, and to ensure benefits and protections for workers in these communities." The working group has met once, and has a very short timeframe to report back.

KFTC recently signed onto a letter to this working group from several dozen groups working in and with coal communities.

6. Many other bills and resolutions beginning to move in March!

Immediately after Congress passes the COVID relief bill, we expect them to take up a large Recovery Bill (the Build Back Better Infrastructure bill). Congress can pass two bills this year using the budget reconciliation process, which only requires support from 51 Senators. Apparently, that's how Congressional leaders intend to move the infrastructure bill.

Many, many other important bills have been introduced recently, or will be soon. Some of these are being filed as stand alone legislation with the hope that they will be folded into the giant infrastructure bill. Others are moving through the House, and will create a log-jam in the Senate unless / until the filibuster rule is broken.

Some important bills moving swiftly through the US House include:

HR 1: For The People Act

This measure, which has also been introduced in the Senate as S. 1, would establish automatic voter registration, a national guarantee of free and fair elections without voter suppression, a commitment to restore the Voting Rights Act, small donor public financing of elections, an end

to partisan gerrymandering, other campaign finance reforms, and strengthening of federal ethics rules. The House passed HR 1 on March 4, 2021. This [Washington Post article](#) offers a good overview.

George Floyd Justice in Policing Act: The US House passed this bill on March 4, 2021. The legislation bans chokeholds and makes it more possible to hold law enforcement officers accountable for killing people and other forms of abuses of power and misconduct. It is an important step to addressing systemic racism and ending devastating acts of violence against Black and brown people by police. The bill passed the House on the 30th anniversary of the police beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles, an event captured on film that touched off waves of revolt and protest. This [Washington Post article](#) offers a good overview.

US Citizenship Act:

This legislation, introduced in the House by Rep. Linda Sanchez, establishes a pathway to legal residency and eventually citizenship for as many as 11 million people, including many undocumented immigrants, people with DACA status (Dreamers), folks with Temporary Protected Status, essential workers, agricultural workers, spouses and children of green card holders, and more.

Care Economy

KFTC recently [signed-on to a letter](#) from SEIU and National Domestic Workers Association calling on President Biden to make good on his commitment to invest \$450 billion in home and community based services - to expand access to services and create good jobs for the care workforce, who are overwhelmingly women, and disproportionately Black, Indigenous and people of color, including many immigrants.

Clean Futures Act

This is an ambitious bill to accelerate the transition to clean energy. It includes many important and powerful elements, including a Clean Energy Standard for the electric power sector that reduces greenhouse gas emissions by between 2005 and 2030 by 50% and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. That said, there are elements of this bill that are concerning to KFTC. The devil is, as always, in the details. And in this case the words “net-zero” are doing a lot of work. Net-zero does not necessarily mean renewable, and may include massive public subsidies for expensive and dangerous technologies, including nuclear power and carbon capture and sequestration.

PRO Act

On March 9, the US House is expected to pass the PRO Act, legislation to protect workers' rights to organize a union and remove barriers to collective bargaining. [This post by the Economic Policy Institute](#) describes key provisions of the act.

7. Meanwhile, back in KY, it's time to make our voices heard to protect rate-payers and rooftop solar. Here's how to take action

- Submit a comment on LG&E / KU Case
- Submit a comment on Kentucky Power Net-metering case
- Volunteer to help with our Rural Electric Coop Scorecard project

8. Upcoming Webinars and Events

March 15: recommended deadline for submitting comments to oppose LG&E / KU plan to raise rates and rig the rules against rooftop solar

March 16 at 6 pm ET: Webinar to refresh understanding of RECLAIM Act and Abandoned Mine Lands Reauthorization:

March 18: US House Committee on Natural Resources will hold a hearing on RECLAIM Act and AML Reauthorization

March 31: A Kentucky Town Hall Meeting about Just Transition, THRIVE agenda, and first 100 days

April 6: Public Service Commission public hearing on Kentucky Power's proposal to harm rooftop solar

Update from March 2, 2021

1. COVID Relief bill passes House and moves to the Senate

Last Friday, the US House passed the American Rescue Plan, a \$1.9 Trillion package of aid to workers, families, individuals, state and local governments, vaccine programs, and schools.

KFTC issued this statement as the bill passed through the US House Budget Committee, chaired by Congressman John Yarmuth.

A Senate version of this bill will be taken up by the US Senate, starting on Wednesday. That will kick off 20 hours of debate. Then sometime on Thursday the Senate is expected to begin voting on proposed amendments. That process will stretch to late Friday or early Saturday morning. There will be two kinds of amendments considered: a) proposals that meet the Senate's rules for budget reconciliation and need only 51 votes to be adopted, and b) proposals that do not meet the reconciliation requirements and need 60 votes to break a filibuster.

The biggest issues under negotiation appear to be

- a) Extending federal unemployment benefits through next October (the House version extends through the end of August) and keeping the federal unemployment benefit at \$400 a week.

- b) b) Keeping the existing income eligibility requirements for \$1,400 survival checks.
- c) c) Preserving the level of aid to states and local governments.

Keep in mind that all of these issues are being negotiated among Democrats in the Senate, since it is unlikely that the bill will receive support from GOP members.

The Senate Parliamentarian ruled that part of the House bill to raise the minimum wage gradually to \$15/hour does not meet the Senate's rules for bills that use the budget reconciliation process. While negotiations are still underway, we expect that the minimum wage increase will therefore be pulled out of the Senate's version of the COVID relief bill. Senator Bernie Sanders will instead offer it as an amendment, setting up a vote on the Senate floor. It is not expected to get the 60 votes necessary to be adopted, but it will make all members of the Senate take a public vote on the issue.

The House just added Monday to its legislative calendar, indicating that it could quickly take up and pass the Senate's version of the bill next week.

- 2. Rural Power Coalition advances demand for \$100 billion in debt relief for rural coops in return for investments in bill relief for customers and clean energy investments

This is a BIG moment for KFTC and our allies working to transform rural electric cooperatives.

Together with allies in the Rural Power Coalition, we delivered a letter to Congress, signed by 100 other organizations across the US, describing a 7-point platform for rural co-op reform. And we engaged key members in the US House and Senate about these proposals.

We got some great press about this campaign.

Thursday night, March 4 at 7 pm ET / 6 pm CT

Join a national webinar with the Rural Power Coalition to learn more about this organizing agenda and the strategy to move it forward. Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85966565474>; Meeting ID: 859 6656 5474

- 3. The RECLAIM Act and reauthorization of Abandoned Mine Lands program are on the move in the US House.

KFTC members and our allies have been pushing for Congress to invest \$1 billion in a program to clean up abandoned mine lands and polluted waterways since 2015. Last year the RECLAIM Act passed the US House, but went nowhere in the Senate when it was controlled by Kentucky Senator Mitch McConnell.

This year, it's also urgent that Congress pass the RECLAIM Act AND legislation to reauthorize the Abandoned Mine Lands Program, which is set to sunset at the end of the year unless action is taken. These important bills are once again moving in the US House!

Here are upcoming dates to keep in mind:

- March 8: These bills will (hopefully) be introduced in the House.
 - March 16 at 6 pm: A national webinar for grassroots supporters to learn more about the RECLAIM Act and AML re-authorization, and discuss strategy ideas. Registration link coming soon!
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 - March 29: A national online spokesperson training for grassroots supporters of these bills who are willing to serve as media spokespeople. Registration link coming soon.
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Many, many other important bills have been introduced recently, or will be soon. Some of these are being filed as stand alone legislation with the hope that they will be folded into the giant infrastructure bill. Many additional priorities are beginning to move through the House, and will create a log-jam in the Senate unless / until the filibuster rule is broken.

Some bills gaining traction in the House include:

HR 1: For The People Act

This measure, which has also been introduced in the Senate as S. 1, would establish automatic voter registration, a national guarantee of free and fair elections without voter suppression, a commitment to restore the Voting Rights Act, small donor public financing of elections, an end to partisan gerrymandering, other campaign finance reforms, and strengthening of federal ethics rules.

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 - b. Submit a comment on Kentucky Power Net-metering case
 - c. Volunteer to help with our Rural Electric Coop Scorecard project

8. Upcoming Webinars and events
 - a. March 4 at 6 pm ET: Webinar about LG&E / KU Rate Case
 - b. March 4 at 7 pm ET: Webinar about our proposal for conditional debt relief for rural coops: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85966565474>
 - c. March 15: recommended deadline for submitting comments to oppose LG&E / KU plan to raise rates and rig the rules against rooftop solar
 - d. March 16 at 7 pm: Webinar to refresh understanding of RECLAIM Act and Abandoned Mine Lands Reauthorization:
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 - g. April 6: Public Service Commission public hearing on Kentucky Power’s proposal to harm rooftop solar

Update to KFTC members regarding Just Transition policies in first 100 days
February 23, 2021

1. COVID Relief Bill advances in the US House

On February 23rd, KFTC issued the following statement urging immediate relief and a fundamental restructuring of our economy:

“Kentuckians stand to benefit as much or more than residents of any other state from a package of federal COVID relief measures that cleared the U.S. House Budget Committee yesterday, a panel chaired by Democratic Congressperson Rep. John Yarmuth of Louisville.

Kentuckians For The Commonwealth, a statewide grassroots social justice organization, applauds Rep. Yarmuth’s leadership on the bill. And we urge other members of Congress,

including Kentucky's GOP senators and representatives, to do their jobs by passing the bill immediately and delivering urgently needed relief to Kentuckians and all Americans.

"This pandemic has exaggerated the inequities in our economy and society, and this relief package is the least Congress should do. It's a necessary band-aid," noted KFTC Chairperson Cassia Herron. "Going forward, we don't just need relief. We need Black and brown Americans and women, immigrants and low-paid workers leading the change to create a democratic, shared economy."

The COVID relief bill passed by the U.S. House Budget Committee today contains important seeds of the kinds of long-term changes that are needed. For example:

\$15 minimum wage. The House bill includes a gradual increase in the minimum wage to \$15 / hour. Kentucky has the highest share of workers earning the minimum wage of any state. While the cities of Louisville and Lexington both previously voted to raise minimum wages for workers in their communities, those local ordinances were later overturned. Meanwhile, many state incentives and corporate tax breaks approved by our state legislators – including the absurdly low tax rate just approved for horse-racing slot machines – are subsidizing the creation of jobs that fall far short of providing the income necessary for people to be able to care for their families. Kentuckians need the federal government to step in and raise the minimum wage.

Child credit of up to \$3,600 per young child: The bill contains a fully refundable tax credit of up to \$3,600 per child for children up to 6 years old and \$3,000 for children between 6 and 17. In 2021, this credit would be paid to families on a monthly basis, beginning in the summer. The current federal tax code contains a child credit of \$2,000. However, many low-income families - including half of all Black and Latino children and half of all rural children - do not receive the full credit because their families earn too little. The House proposal makes the full amount available to all but the very highest income families. In Kentucky, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that 421,000 children under the age of 17 are not eligible for the full \$2,000 credit, and would benefit under the new proposal.

Expands the Earned Income Tax Credit for low-paid adults who are not raising children in their home. The House plan triples from \$530 to \$1,500 the Earned Income Tax Credit for eligible low-paid workers who are not raising children. This provision affects workers earning less than \$21,000 a year. It also expands eligibility to adults aged 19-24 who are not full time students, and workers over the age of 65.

\$1,400 Survival Checks. The House plan sends survival checks worth \$1,400 to individuals who make up to \$75,000 a year or who earn less than \$150,000 as a couple. This one-time payment doesn't go far enough to help people keep shelter over their heads and food on their tables. But it is an important acknowledgement from the federal government that one of the most effective ways to help people facing economic hardship is to provide direct cash assistance without strings.

Unemployment Insurance. The House plan extends \$400 a week in federal unemployment benefits through the end of August 2021. This is down from \$600 a week in the first COVID relief bill passed in May 2020. But current federal unemployment benefits are set to expire March 14, 2021.

Immigrant Inclusion in Survival Checks. The House plan includes survival checks for some mixed status families, so families with 2.2 million U.S. citizen children can get relief, even if the parents are not documented. However, 9.3 million immigrant taxpayers with Individual Taxpayer

Identification Numbers, including millions of essential workers, continue to be left out of survival checks, yet again.

Federal Aid to State and Local Governments: The package includes \$350 billion in federal aid to state and local governments to help shore up the budgets of those governments and prevent layoffs of public workers. Kentucky has already seen a significant decline in public jobs due to the pandemic. [A new analysis by the Washington Post](#) shows that state government jobs in Kentucky declined by 12 percent in 2020. As new federal funds begin to flow to states, counties and cities, Kentuckians will need to be organized and relentless in demanding that these resources be invested in ways that benefit our communities, address inequality, and repair harm.

Expansion of health care to millions of Americans: The package increases the size of federal health care subsidies available to people who currently qualify (folks earning between 100 and 400 percent of the federal poverty limit) under the Affordable Care Act. And it makes federal subsidies available for the first time to 2.6 million people who currently make too much money to qualify but still can't afford premiums.

KFTC members look to Congressman Yarmuth and our other members of Congress to follow the lead of their BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color) colleagues and pass big bold legislation like the THRIVE (Transform, Heal, and Renew by Investing in a Vibrant Economy) agenda and Breathe Act that provide states and local governments with incentives to build inclusive and generative local economies.”

2. Together with the Rural Power Coalition, KFTC calls on Congress to transform rural electric cooperatives and the communities they serve

On February 23rd, KFTC joined with allies in the Rural Power Coalition to send a letter to Congress signed by 100 organizations across the US. The letter calls on Congress to support and pass a 7-part agenda to transform rural electric cooperatives and the communities they serve, based on shared principles of self-determination, justice, environmental stewardship, and civil and human rights. The platform includes:

1. An immediate moratorium on utility shutoffs, deposits, customer late fees, and negative credit reporting through the duration of the crisis. Assure flexible, budget billing arrangements on electricity and broadband service, so that debt is not accruing for member-owners that cannot afford it.

2. Add at least \$17 billion to the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) for bill relief (over 10 times more than in the CARES Act), and assure the Department of Health & Human Services engages National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) members to help them efficiently refer members to access that bill relief.

3. \$100 billion in appropriations for federally insured Hardship Loans from the Rural Utilities Service along with conditions for loan forgiveness akin to those offered in the CARES Act through the Small Business Administration. These conditions would facilitate the retirement of all coal plants currently in operation and potentially all outstanding electric cooperative debt in exchange for new investment in clean energy, distributed energy resources, energy efficiency, high speed broadband, storage, and electric transportation with new loans at U.S. Treasury rates.

4. Treat electric cooperatives fairly in reform of renewable energy tax credits so that they receive the same vital option for direct payment that is afforded to every other type of utility in The Moving Forward Act passed by the House.

5. Higher authorization for the Rural Utilities Service Treasury Rate Loan program, which also capitalizes the Energy Efficiency & Conservation Loan Program (EECLP).

6. A large increase in appropriated funding for the Rural Cooperative Development Grants (RCDG), Rural Economic Development Loans and Grants (REDL&G), Rural Energy Savings Program (RESP).

7. Require national implementation of inclusive tariffs for site-specific utility investments that also provide a path to ownership for participating customers, such as Pay As You Save financing programs already demonstrated by more than a dozen electric cooperatives in Kansas, Kentucky, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina.

3. LG&E / KU Rate Case - Action needed!

While these and other important policies are being considered in Washington DC, Kentuckians also have our hands full trying to protect and advance Just Transition policies in our state legislature and in the Kentucky Public Service Commission. Here's just one example:

Louisville Gas and Electric and Kentucky Utilities are trying to raise rates - again - and rig the rules to destroy the future of rooftop solar in Kentucky.

Right now is an important time to send written comments against this plan to the Kentucky Public Service Commission.

[Here's how to submit your comment.](#)

This link takes you to an information page with details about the proposal, suggested talking points, and information about how to email or mail your comments to the PSC.

KFTC urges every LG&E / KU to take a few moments to write your own personal message, even if it's brief, by March 15th. PSC commissioners have told us they are most persuaded by personal messages from ratepayers. It's fine to copy and paste some of the suggested talking points if you like.

Update Feb 17, 2021

The COVID relief package now being negotiated in the US House would also be a significant step forward for expanding affordable health care in the US. The bill would extend coverage to 4-5 million people who are currently uninsured by:

- Increasing the federal subsidies to lower health care premiums for people earning between 100% and 400% of the federal poverty limit. (These are folks who are currently eligible for health care subsidies under the Affordable Care Act.)
- Extending subsidies to 2.6 million people who make too much money to qualify for existing subsidies.

Update: Feb 17, 2021

Extreme winter weather is affecting huge parts of Central and Southern US. The failures of the electric power grid in Texas are getting the most attention, with various bad-faith actors rushing in to blame reliance on wind energy for the power outages affecting millions of people.

Exhibit A: Two absurdly bad-faith tweets by Rep. Andy Barr, who represents KY's 6th district in Central Kentucky.

<https://twitter.com/RepAndyBarr/status/1361764379037949959?s=20>

<https://twitter.com/RepAndyBarr/status/1361764380531183616?s=20>

Rep. Barr was apparently moved by a tweet from the account of "Friends of Coal-KY", which declared "Renewable Resources have let Texas Residents Down."

As many voices on Twitter have already pointed out: hundreds of thousands of Kentuckians are without power right now in frigid winter weather, despite the fact that our utilities are still massively reliant on coal-fired power. Also, the claim that grid problems in Texas were caused by frozen wind turbines is a lie.

Here are some talking points KFTC members and allies can use to push back on this bad-faith misinformation and expand the public's understanding of the multiple system failures that have created so much hardship in Texas.

<https://fossilfree.media/2021/02/a-fossil-fail-texas-blackout-talking-points/>

<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/texas-frozen-wind-turbines-john-cornyn-b1803193.htm>

↓

Update, Feb 16, 2021

Coming soon from Reps Reps Bowman, Nikema Williams and Cori Bush: The Care Resolution

- Outlines the need for transformative public investments in care infrastructure and the care crisis for people, families, disability communities, and women of color in the care workforce.

- Calls for guaranteeing universal, high-quality health care, home and community based services, child care, and paid family and medical leave, along with economic justice and robust protections for care workers.
- Lays out a plan for a more expansive vision of an economy strengthened by the care economy. For example tying in education and the intersections between the crises of care and climate change.
- Invitation to [sign-on to be an organizational sponsor of the Care Resolution here.](#)

Memo: February 15, 2021

To: KFTC leaders and staff and a growing circle of KY Just Transition allies

From: Lisa Abbott, Deputy Organizing Director for Just Transition

Re: (mostly) federal actions affecting people, health, climate, jobs, & equity

1. Covid Relief bill (American Rescue Plan)

For the next month, Congress is focused on negotiating and passing a \$1.9 Trillion COVID relief bill. This legislation is being moved using a process called “budget reconciliation” which means it needs just 51 votes to pass the US Senate, rather than the 60 votes that are usually required to break a filibuster.

Nine House committees are now working to mark up specific sections of the bill. The whole package will be voted on in the House before the end of February, first by the House Budget Committee (chaired by KY Congressperson John Yarmuth) and then by the full House. Then it will move to the Senate. Congressional leaders want the bill passed and signed before March 14th, when federal unemployment provisions are set to expire.

Right now is the time to push members of the House and Senate to pass a big, bold, bill and fast! Here are some of the issues to be aware of and lift up:

\$15 minimum wage. The House bill includes a gradual increase in the minimum wage to \$15 / hour. Kentucky has the highest share of workers earning the minimum wage of any state. There is some opposition to raising the wage in the US Senate. We can expect a procedural fight in the Senate about whether or not Senate rules will even allow it to be included in a budget bill. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer has declared his support for raising the wage.

\$1,400 Survival Checks. The House plan sends survival checks worth \$1,400 to people who make up to \$75,000 a year (\$150,000 for couples). Some Senators want to exclude about 40 million Americans by lowering the eligibility threshold to individuals earning less than \$50,000. Again, Sen. Schumer has signaled his support for keeping the income limits at current levels.

Unemployment Insurance. The House plan provides \$400 a week in federal unemployment benefits through the end of August 2021. There may be a fight in the Senate to increase the amount to \$600 a week and push the deadline forward by one month to September 2021.

Immigrant Inclusion in Survival Checks. The House plan includes survival checks for some mixed status families, so parents of approx. 2.2 million US citizen children can get relief, even if the

parents are not documented. However 9.3 million immigrant taxpayers with Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers, including millions of essential workers, continue to be left out of survival checks yet again.

Federal Aid to State and Local Governments: The package includes \$350 billion in federal aid to state and local governments to help shore up the budgets of those governments and prevent layoffs of public workers. Kentucky has already seen a significant decline in public jobs due to the pandemic. [A new analysis by the Washington Post](#) shows that state government jobs in KY declined by 12% in 2020.

The final outcome depends on negotiations among Democrats. Passage of any bill in the Senate is likely to require support from 100% of Democratic Senators, plus a tie-breaking vote from Vice President Kamala Harris. While Kentucky's two US Senators are expected to oppose the bill, they don't have the power to determine the outcome if all Democrats vote together.

Conservative Democrats, on the other hand, will have a great deal of leverage in negotiations with members of their own party.

Finally, we learned last week that the COVID Relief bill in the House is likely to include \$8 billion for a new Public Health Corps. This could create about 130,000 good paying jobs in communities of color, low-income communities, Tribal communities, disabled communities, immigrant communities, and among other marginalized groups. These workers would be trained to share public health information, help connect folks to health services and vaccines, and overcome barriers to accessing quality healthcare.

The creation of a new Public Health Corps is just one example of the many ways that the vision and agenda of the Green New Deal is already being enacted in bits and pieces of larger legislation. The Green New Deal resolution - which is now being called the THRIVE resolution - calls for new investments to create good jobs in the "care economy," and specifically calls for more investments in public health jobs.

2. Build Back Better Recovery Plan: A chance to advance our agenda for Just Transition

Even while Congress is working to pass the RELIEF bill described above, efforts are also underway to draft a RECOVERY plan that will authorize massive new investments in infrastructure and job creation. Congressional leaders will probably use the same budget reconciliation process to pass it through the Senate with a simple majority vote if necessary.

The Biden administration calls this bill the "Build Back Better Recovery Plan." KFTC and many of our allies in climate justice, racial justice, and labor movements see it as an opportunity to include and win important elements of our own Just Transition agendas. We are working with four overlapping but different national coalitions to push for the following ideas to be included:

- a. The National GND coalition is working with lawmakers to finalize and introduce the THRIVE Act in early March. This legislation is intended to influence the economic recovery bill that will be negotiated in March-summer, and to support messaging and organizing. It calls for investments of trillion dollars a year for the next ten years to drive climate, racial justice, and job creation standards and outcomes. KFTC is working closely with the national GND coalition and allies here in Kentucky (Sunrise, Hood to the Holler,

IUE-CWA, and other groups) to coordinate communications and organizing strategies in support of the THRIVE agenda.

- b. We're also part of a coalition of groups pushing for Congress to include a number of reforms to Rural Electric Cooperatives. Rural Co-ops are non-profit utilities created as part of President Roosevelt's New Deal. Over many decades, co-ops have received billions of dollars of low-interest loans through the US Dept of Agriculture to build coal-fired power plants. We're proposing a massive loan forgiveness program for co-ops that retire those power plants and invest instead in a) bill forgiveness, b) energy efficiency, c) renewable energy, and d) broadband infrastructure. Our coalition is working with several members of the Congressional Black Caucus to draft a discussion bill that we can then push Congress to include in a broader infrastructure package.

Here's what this proposal could mean for Kentucky: The East Kentucky Power Cooperative provides electric power to about 500,000 customers in eastern and central Kentucky. Right now EKPC pays \$1.6 million dollars a day just to service its debts. That money flies out of our pockets and communities every single day to pay for EKPC's past investments in coal plants that hurt our health and climate and that are no longer the cheapest source of power. Our proposal would give EKPC a way to retire that bad debt (and retire those coal plants) in return for making new investments locally sourced energy efficiency and renewable energy and/or cancelling customer's overdue bills.

- c. We're part of a coalition of groups who have been pushing Congress to "Fix What's Broke" by passing the RECLAIM Act to clean up abandoned coal mines and polluted waterways, and by strengthening funding for the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund. We want any infrastructure bill to include those and other provisions.
- d. We've also signed a letter to Congress to support the 30 million solar rooftops initiative. This includes policies needed to make rooftop solar accessible to low-income communities and communities of color. See last week's memo for details.

3. Update on additional Federal Climate / GND proposals

And there's more! Many stand-alone bills are being introduced by members of Congress in hopes of setting the table for bold climate legislation. Last week, for example, KFTC and our environmental justice / climate justice allies were asked by Rep. Cori Bush's office to review a draft of a bill that would offer 70% federal funding to any city, town, county or Tribal nation for implementation of local Green New Deal policies if certain conditions (equity, labor, health) are met. One of the conditions written into this bill is that the county/town/city would need to pay for $\frac{1}{3}$ of the remaining $\frac{1}{3}$ of local GND investments with funds drawn from police budgets.

4. KY GND / Just Transition Organizing Project Update

As we've discussed before, KFTC, Hood to the Holler, youth climate leaders working with Sunrise, and other Kentucky groups are working on a collaborative project in 2021 to build grassroots power and support for bold, intersectional, policies that address climate, racial and economic justice, and good jobs. A number of other allies in Kentucky have recently expressed interest in this project, including IUE-CWA, a progressive union that represents 5,000 manufacturing workers in Kentucky.

Our shared plan calls for partner organizations and a growing coalition to coordinate to the extent possible to help advance federal GND policies. We've committed to investing time and resources in building relationships and a diverse coalition in KY, and to investing resources to support local organizing, especially in Black and brown communities and among young Kentuckians. We'll host 3-6 joint regional trainings in late summer or early fall with hundreds of grassroots leaders in our organizations and networks. And we will organize door-to-door conversations with thousands of Kentuckians about their vision and ideas for a Just Transition and Green New Deal.

There are a lot of next steps needed to get this new coalition and organizing project off the ground, starting with intentional conversations with potential coalition partners, setting up systems for communication and coordination among our groups, and planning for joint training sessions and canvassing efforts.

The national Green New Deal Coalition is planning for:

- March 5: Introduction of the THRIVE act
- March 16: A digital rally for THRIVE - we'll share a link to this broadcast soon
- March 31: A day of actions in states
- April 7: Congressional Call-in day

The national GND coalition has asked KFTC and our allies in Kentucky to organize a public event on March 31st in support of the THRIVE agenda. For example, could we host a virtual town hall, featuring a panel of 4-5 Kentuckians who describe why we need and support a Just Transition and the THRIVE agenda? KFTC will reach out to allies this week to gather input, and our New Energy and Transition Committee will discuss this idea on our next call on Feb 22 at 7 pm ET / 6 pm CT. If you have ideas or questions, please reach out to lisa@kftc.org.

5. Rural Electric Cooperative Organizing Campaign Update

KFTC and Mountain Association are working to create a scorecard for all rural electric co-ops in Kentucky. We're looking for about 30 volunteers willing to do about 3-6 hours of research in February or March about your local rural electric cooperative.

[Sign up here to help!](#)

Thanks to everyone who has signed up so far. Volunteers will receive more information from me later this week so you can get started.

6. LG&E / KU Rate Case - Action needed

Louisville Gas and Electric and Kentucky Utilities are trying to raise rates - again - and rig the rules to destroy the future of rooftop solar in Kentucky.

Right now is an important time to send written comments against this plan to the Kentucky Public Service Commission. [Here's how.](#)

This link takes you to an information page with details about the proposal, suggested talking points, and information about how to email or mail your comments to the PSC.

We urge every LG&E / KU to take a few moments to write your own personal message, even if it's brief. PSC commissioners have told us they are most persuaded by personal messages from ratepayers. It's fine to copy and paste some of the suggested talking points if you like.

Together with our allies we are working to get as many comments as possible submitted by March 15, 2021.

7. Kentucky Power Net Metering Case Update

The PSC is also re-considering part of a recent Kentucky Power (not to be confused with Kentucky Utilities) rate case that has huge implications for the future of rooftop solar in Kentucky. If you are a Kentucky Power customer, watch this space for more information - including talking points - about sending written comments (again) to the PSC.

Memo: February 8, 2021
To: KFTC's Land Reform Committee, New Energy and Transition Committee, Steering Committee, staff, interested KFTC members and Just Transition allies
From: Lisa Abbott, Deputy Organizing Director for Just Transition
Re: (mostly) Federal actions affecting people, land, water, air, energy, health, climate

1. COVID relief bill

On Friday, both the US Senate and the US House passed resolutions supporting President Biden's \$1.9 Trillion COVID relief bill. Those resolutions are important, but they are only procedural and pave the way for actual, detailed legislation to pass later this month with only a simple majority of support in the US Senate, rather than the 60 votes needed to break a filibuster.

Next the details of the bill must be hammered out by House leaders, where Speaker Pelosi has said she intends to pass legislation before the end of February. Some lawmakers are floating a proposal to significantly expand a per-child tax credit, raising it to \$3,600 in 2021. Others are seeking to more quickly phase out \$1,400 survival checks for folks with higher incomes. It is not yet clear whether an increase in the federal minimum wage proposed by the Biden Administration will be included in the House bill. That proposal faces opposition in the Senate and may not survive procedural challenges. Lawmakers must also decide whether immigrants - many of whom are essential workers and whose health and incomes have been especially hard hit during the pandemic - will be eligible for the survival checks.

Tuesday Feb 9th is a critical day for determining if the minimum wage increase will remain in the legislation. 192 House members and 38 Senators have signed onto the Raise the Wage Act already. Getting that number higher will help keep the minimum wage provision in the package.

Bad jobs numbers in January caused Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen to warn Sunday that The U.S. labor market is stalling and in a "deep hole" that could take years to escape if lawmakers do not quickly pass an aid package that gives workers a bridge to the end of the pandemic. She focused on the toll that the virus and the pandemic economy have taken on Black and brown communities, and said the American Rescue Plan is "badly needed to make sure this pandemic isn't another generational setback for racial equality."

One update (3 pm on 2/9/2021): We've learned that the relief bill being developed in the House will include \$8 billion for a new public health workforce. At \$45,000 / job, that's roughly 130,000 new jobs. This workforce is supposed to be drawn from communities hardest hit by the pandemic and work through local health departments to do outreach around pandemic protection (masks, vaccines, etc), access and equity in health services, and long term health care needs of people affected by COVID. This could be an opportunity to build relationships with health advocates in KY and help push for meaningful job creation with a priority for rural and urban communities of color and areas with high poverty & unemployment. Lots to learn.

2. THRIVE Agenda (the agenda formerly known as the Green New Deal) reintroduced

The THRIVE Resolution was reintroduced in Congress on Friday. It lays groundwork for national response to economic recovery, racial justice and climate change. THRIVE stands for: Transform, Heal, and Renew by Investing in a Vibrant Economy, and is often used instead of the words “Green New Deal.”

The THRIVE Agenda is supported by more than 200 national and local organizations, including the American Federation of Teachers, Center for American Progress, Church World Service, Climate Justice Alliance, Color of Change, Communications Workers of America, Green New Deal Network, Indigenous Environmental Network, League of Conservation Voters, Movement for Black Lives, People’s Action, Service Employees International Union, Sierra Club, Sunrise Movement, United We Dream. (KFTC is an active member of the Climate Justice Alliance.)

KFTC is working closely with the coalition of groups named above to build public support for big, bold, intersectional climate legislation along the lines of the THRIVE agenda. And we’re helping to build a strong, diverse coalition of groups in Kentucky. We’ll say more about that in the next section!

The national Green New Deal Coalition is working to get a THRIVE bill (actual legislation, not just a resolution) introduced in the next two months, as part of a strategy to shape the content of an economic recovery package (the Build Back Better infrastructure plan) that Congress is likely to take up they handle passage of the COVID relief bill described above.

We haven’t seen a draft of the proposed THRIVE legislation yet. But it is likely to include:

- (i) The objectives named in the THRIVE resolution
- (ii) a massive authorization of \$\$ needed to accomplish those objectives
- (ii) cross-cutting labor, equity and environmental standards that must follow those investments

3. Build Back Better Economic Recovery Plan

The Biden Administration has signaled that it will push for an Economic Recovery plan (a massive infrastructure bill) as soon as Congress finishes with the \$1.9 Trillion economic relief plan. Every group and special interest under the sun is eyeing that opportunity. Here are a number of ways KFTC and our allies are pushing members of Congress to shape this bill:

- As described above, KFTC is working with allies to ensure that any infrastructure plan addresses climate crisis, racial justice, and economic justice and includes as much of the THRIVE agenda as possible. For example, it should include major investments in apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship training programs, in public health infrastructure and the care economy, in energy efficient affordable housing, in renewable energy and energy efficiency projects that benefit communities of color and low-income communities, and much more.

- KFTC is part of a coalition of groups pushing for Congress to include a number of reforms to Rural Electric Cooperatives. Rural Co-ops are non-profit utilities created as part of President Roosevelt’s New Deal. Over many decades, co-ops have received billions of dollars of low-interest loans through the US Dept of Agriculture to build coal-fired power plants. We’re proposing a massive loan forgiveness program for co-ops that retire those power plants and invest instead in a) bill forgiveness, b) energy efficiency, c) renewable energy, and d) broadband infrastructure.
- KFTC is part of a coalition of groups who have been pushing Congress to “Fix What’s Broke” by passing the RECLAIM Act to clean up abandoned coal mines and polluted waterways, and by strengthening funding for the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund. We want any infrastructure bill to include those and other provisions.
- Last week KFTC signed onto a letter to Congress to support the 30 million solar rooftops initiative. This includes a number of policies needed to make rooftop solar accessible to low-income communities and communities of color, including:
 - extend current solar tax credits and offer them as cash grants
 - expand “pay as you save” programs to include on-bill solar and energy efficiency
 - provide loan guarantees, block grants to local governments, and subsidized financing for solar.
 - coordinate with energy assistance and weatherization programs to deploy rooftop solar and community solar that serves low-income households
 - support equitable and locally owned community solar for renters and folks whose rooftops aren’t suitable to be able to benefit.
 - Support new solar businesses owned by people of color and workforce development that trains people of color, low-income folks, and other disadvantaged groups for jobs in the industry.

4. A new KY-based Just Transition / Green New Deal organizing project is taking off

In recent months, KFTC has been in conversations with Hood to the Holler and a number of KY youth climate leaders to launch a Just Transition / Green New Deal organizing project in 2021. (This project still needs a good name!)

With support from the national Green New Deal Coalition, we plan to invest in organizing efforts to grow public support for Just Transition policies in Black and brown and low-income white communities and with young Kentuckians. We will hold 3-6 regional in person trainings in the fall of 2021 (COVID-willing) for volunteers to learn effective ways to have conversations with our neighbors about the overlapping climate, racial justice, and economic justice crises. With the help of hundreds of volunteers and some paid canvassers, we will support door-to-door canvassing conversations with thousands of Kentuckians this fall.

As part of this project, we hope to build a new, diverse statewide coalition to push for intersectional climate, racial justice, and economic justice policies.

In recent weeks KFTC has had several good conversations with Kentucky-based union leaders, including folks working with IUE-CWA (International Union of Electronic, Electrical, Salaried, Machine and Furniture Workers-Communications Workers of America) who are interested in collaborating around the THRIVE agenda. They represent 4,0000 workers in Louisville's GE plant and another large manufacturing facility in Western Kentucky.

5. KFTC and Mountain Association are working to create a scorecard for all rural electric co-ops in Kentucky. Volunteers are needed: [Sign up here to help!](#)

We're looking for about 30 people willing to do about 3-6 hours of research in February or March about your local rural electric cooperative. Most of the questions can be answered by online research.

6. KFTC continues to fight utility rate increases and attacks on Solar Net Metering at the KY Public Service Commission

In January we won some important victories in our opposition to a rate increase sought by Kentucky Power. However, the PSC did not issue a final rule on KY Power's attempt to kill off rooftop solar by slashing the amount of credit that solar customers get for the energy their systems put on the grid. Instead, the PSC allowed KY Power to implement its terrible solar policy while the PSC holds yet another "supplemental hearing" about the issue and will deliver a final ruling this spring. KFTC is working with allies (Mountain Association and Kentucky Solar Energy Society) to encourage public comments (again!) for that supplemental hearing, and together we've hired an expert witness to provide testimony in the case.

KFTC is also partnering with those same allies and the Louisville-based Metropolitan Housing Coalition to oppose a new rate increase sought by Louisville Gas and Electric and Kentucky Utilities, the two largest utilities in the state. We are represented before the Public Service Commission by Tom FitzGerald of the Kentucky Resources Council. Be on the lookout for an action alert coming soon from KFTC with more information about this case and ways to make your voice heard!

Memo: January 29, 2021
To: KFTC's Land Reform Committee, New Energy and Transition Committee, Steering Committee, staff, and key allies
From: Lisa Abbott, Deputy Organizing Director for Just Transition
Re: Federal actions affecting our people, land, water, air, energy, health and climate

What a year this week has been. This memo provides an overview of a number of fast moving federal policies and executive actions related to climate justice, environmental justice, and just transition. I'll try to keep us updated regularly during these first 100 days of the new administration.

1. COVID Relief Bill

Democrats in the House and Senate are preparing to pass a \$1.9 trillion COVID relief bill – the American Rescue Plan proposed by President Biden – in early February. The bill contains additional survival checks, expanded unemployment benefits, an increase in the earned income tax credit, an increase in the federal minimum wage, an extended moratorium on evictions, aid to states and local governments, and other important measures.

It is unlikely to win GOP support, although negotiations are still on-going. Because Senate rules require support from 60 senators for most legislation to move forward, Democrats may need to use a process called “budget reconciliation,” which requires only 51 votes, to get it through the Senate.

Action needed to push for strong COVID relief bill: National allies are urging KFTC and our members to put pressure on members of Congress by using this tool provided by Indivisible to call their offices with the following demands:

- Include the proposal to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour
- Expand health care access for uninsured and unemployed folks through an emergency public plan
- Ensure immigrant and their families have access to all benefits under the bill
- Increase federal aid to state and local governments
- Don't negotiate or accept harmful trade-offs.
- Following through on the commitment of \$2,000 survival checks

In Kentucky, the most important members of Congress to call include Rep John Yarmuth of Louisville, who serves as Budget chair in the House, and Senators Rand Paul and Mitch McConnell. Calling those Senate offices is important, even though they are likely to oppose passage of this essential bill. They need to know Kentuckians are organized and relentless.

In Kentucky, strategies to push for a strong COVID relief bill are being coordinated by the Kentucky Together Coalition. KFTC is part of this coalition, which is anchored by Ky Policy.

2. Build Back Better Infrastructure bill and other climate-specific legislation

After the COVID relief bill, Democrats are signaling that another early priority will be an infrastructure bill that embraces President Biden’s vision for re-making our economy through investments in infrastructure in ways that also address racial justice and the climate crisis. Of course, any big infrastructure bill will be flooded with projects and proposals needed to win political support: including the good, the bad and the ugly.

KFTC is part of several national and regional coalitions that are working hard to make sure our best ideas are included in an infrastructure package, and to guard against false solutions. These include: Climate Justice Alliance, national Green New Deal coalition, groups working for Rural Electric Cooperative reforms, Right to the City (focused on housing justice), and the national RECLAIM / Black Lung coalition.

An infrastructure bill (the Move America Forward Act) passed the House in 2020, and we can expect that any new bill will draw heavily on that legislation. Right now, nearly every industry group and organization in the country is working to make sure their investment priorities are included. Some good ideas – like the RECLAIM Act and many elements of the THRIVE agenda – may be introduced as bills over the next few weeks, in hopes that will increase the chances of those ideas being included in a larger infrastructure bill.

3. Biden Executive Orders on Climate and Just Transition

On Jan 27, President Biden signed a wide ranging Executive Order advancing goals related to climate, environmental justice, and just transition. Key elements of this order include:

- Steps to repair and strengthen the US role in international efforts to address climate change, including a hosting an international climate summit on Earth Day, April 21, 2021.
- Directing the federal government to take a “whole of government” approach to addressing the climate crisis, including new White House National Climate Advisor (Gina McCarthy) and an inter-agency task force.
- Directing federal agencies to purchase electric vehicles manufactured in the US
- Pausing all oil and gas drilling leases on federal lands while there is a federal review to develop long term recommendations. (This does not include a moratorium on coal leases, but there is speculation this could be an outcome of the review.)
- Sets a goal of conserving “30% of our land and oceans” and sets up a stakeholder process to create that plan.
- Creates a Civilian Climate Corps to create jobs for young people in areas of reforestation, agriculture, protecting biodiversity, improving access to recreation, and addressing the changing climate.
- Creates a new stakeholder group to identify “climate smart” agriculture strategies and programs.
- Creates an inter-agency working group on Coal and Power Plant Communities to coordinate investments and other federal Just Transition efforts. This group is directed to consult with stakeholders and deliver a report with recommendations to the President within 60 days.

- Directs the federal government to make environmental justice “part of the mission of every agency” and establishes White House Environmental Justice Interagency Council and a White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council.
- Creates a government-wide “Justice40 Initiative” with the goal of delivering 40 percent of the overall benefits of a relevant federal investments to disadvantaged communities.
- Calls for a new mapping tool and method to identify disadvantaged communities that should receive 40% of benefits from climate-related investments and inform equitable decision-making across the federal government.

Note: The inter-agency working group on coal and power plant communities will be a space where KFTC and our allies can work to make our voices and views known in the next 60 days. It’s on a very tight timetable, but there’s no process yet. This will be a space to push for reclamation of abandoned mine lands and polluted waterways and for strengthening the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund. Other proposals include ways to expand broadband access, invest in clean drinking water infrastructure and renewable energy, invest in energy efficient housing, make energy upgrades to public buildings and infrastructure, and so much more.

4. Environmental Justice Mapping Bill

On the same day as the Exec Orders on Climate were issued by President Biden, Senators Markey and Duckworth and Rep. Cori Bush introduced legislation to determine the best methods to identify environmental justice communities (those communities that Biden’s order says should receive 40% of benefits from climate-related policies). This legislation has been informed by a national coalition KFTC is active in: Climate Justice Alliance. Here’s a quote from the press release:

“This legislation, written through collaboration with grassroots environmental justice leaders, aims to create and authorize funding for a system to comprehensively identify the demographic factors, environmental burdens, socioeconomic conditions, and public health concerns that are related to environmental justice and collect high-quality data through community engagement and a government-wide interagency process. These data would be used to build layered maps depicting which communities experience environmental injustices, and would assist the Biden administration in directing at least 40 percent of the investment in a clean and climate-safe future into communities that have been harmed by racist and unjust environmental practices.”

KFTC members have long called for this kind of policy, as a way to prioritize racial, economic, and environmental justice within any comprehensive plan to address climate change. In the Empower Kentucky Plan, a report written by KFTC members in 2016 and 2017, members did an environmental justice analysis of Kentucky and called for policies that direct benefits (including jobs, clean energy investments, and pollution reduction measures) to communities most affected by racism, poverty, and cumulative environmental pollution.

5. Appointments

President Biden has appointed a number of people who know KFTC's work on climate and just transition well to important positions within the new administration. They include:

Justin Maxson as Deputy Undersecretary for Rural Development. This part of the Department of Agriculture houses the Department for Rural Housing, Department for Rural Development, and Rural Utility Service (RUS). Justin was Executive Director of MACED for 13 years and most recently has been the director of the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, which has supported KFTC's work. He was previously married to KFTC organizer Lisa Abbott. He was a close, strategic ally with KFTC in our early work for Just Transition and rural electric cooperative reform, and gave the key-note at the Appalachia's Bright Future conference KFTC organized in Harlan in 2013.

Wahleah Johns as head of the US Office of Indian Energy Programs and Policies within the US Department of Energy. Wahleah is a Navajo woman who is co-founder and director of Native Renewables, a company that trains Native American solar installers and develops solar projects in Tribal communities. She has also worked as an organizer and was Executive Director of Black Mesa Water Coalition, which is a member group of the Climate Justice Alliance. She visited KFTC when she spoke and led a workshop at the Appalachia's Bright Future conference KFTC organized in Harlan in 2013.

6. Rural Electric Co-op Reform

KFTC is part of a national coalition of grassroots organizations working to advance good governance, clean energy, and energy justice within rural electric cooperatives. Over the past year, we've developed a policy platform aimed at speeding the co-op's just transition to clean energy.

Right now, rural electric co-ops are asking Congress for \$10 billion to restructure debt they owe for decisions to build coal-fired power plants in the past. Our rural co-op reform coalition has a better idea: We propose that Congress allow co-ops to access up to \$100 billion in forgivable loans – as long as they use those funds to invest locally in energy efficiency, renewable energy, bill relief for customers, and/or broadband. Our plan would speed the rapid retirement of polluting coal plants, while driving significant investments in bill relief and clean energy jobs across rural America.

Members of our coalition are meeting with legislators on the House and Senate Agriculture Committees and other congressional leaders and building support for our proposal to be included in the infrastructure bill.

Actions to support rural electric co-operative reform:

- Circulate this sign-on letter to organizations willing to support a 7-plank policy agenda for a just transition to clean energy by rural electric cooperatives. This letter is for organizations of all sizes and anywhere in the US, including faith-based groups, environmental justice groups, labor organizations, clean energy advocates, housing advocates, and more.

- Let [Lisa@kftc.org](mailto:lisa@kftc.org) know if you are a constituent of Rep. John Yarmuth and would be willing to participate in a virtual meeting with his office about our ideas for rural co-op reform. He is budget chairperson in the House, and his support would be powerful.
- Volunteer to help KFTC create a scorecard for all rural electric co-ops in Kentucky. We're looking for about 30 people willing to do about 3-6 hours of research in February or March about your local rural electric cooperative. Most of the questions can be answered by online research. Some may involve a follow-up call to your local co-op. If you can help, please send a message to lisa@kftc.org, and let me know the name of your local co-op. I'll follow-up with more information and help you get started! Thanks!

7. Updates on the Green New Deal / THRIVE Agenda

In January, KFTC received a commitment of support through the national Green New Deal coalition for an organizing and coalition building project in Kentucky in 2021. Initial partners for this project include KFTC, Hood to the Holler, and youth climate leaders.

Together we will work to deepen relationships among our organizations and to build a growing, diverse coalition. We will inform and engage our members to push Congress to support legislation related to the THRIVE agenda. (THRIVE is the new language for Green New Deal). We will invest in organizing for Just Transition policies in Black and brown and low-income white communities and with young Kentuckians. Finally, we will have thousands of face-to-face conversations with Kentuckians by training hundreds of volunteers and supporting high-quality door-to-door canvassing efforts across Kentucky.

Actions to support the Green New Deal / THRIVE Agenda

Join a movement call hosted by the national Green New Deal campaign next Tuesday night, Feb 2, at 7 pm ET / 6 pm CT to learn more about what it will take to win action for climate, jobs, and justice (the THRIVE agenda) in the first 100 days of the new Congress.

RSVP: greennewdealnetwork.org/rsvp

8. Recommendations to the new leadership of the federal Office of Surface Mining (OSM)

KFTC recently signed onto a joint letter drafted by Appalachian Citizens Law Center to the new leadership of the federal Office of Surface Mining about steps needed to address the growing problem unreclaimed land and polluted waterways left behind after repeated waves of coal industry bankruptcies.

9. Feedback? Questions? Suggestions? Please respond to lisa@kftc.org 859-200-5159.

What's useful (or not so useful) about this update? How often do you want to receive updates like this about federal policy campaigns related to climate, clean energy, and Just Transition? What ideas do you have about how KFTC should communicate with and activate our members and allies around federal Just Transition campaigns in these first 100 days?