

Thursday, April 29, 2010

## **True impact on working people of AB 32 is no mere numbers game**

By James Kellogg

It's time for an honest discussion about how California's global warming law (AB 32) will impact jobs in California. Working people in this state are suffering and they need real answers about its job impact, not theories, legacy politics and empty promises.

Consider a few grim statistics: The state's unemployment rate is still above 12 percent. More than 119,000 manufacturing jobs were lost last year. More than 600,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in this state since 2000. Blue collar workers in the building trades have been particularly hard hit, with unemployment rates at some local unions as high as 30 percent to 40 percent.

This isn't a numbers game. These are real people struggling to pay the rent, put food on the table, keep the house warm and pay the light bill. They deserve some straight answers about how AB 32 will impact their lives.

We became concerned after reading a report by the UC Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education which found that green jobs represent less than one percent of the jobs in California. Green jobs would expand under AB 32; however, the report found that this law could potentially impact three million blue-collar, mainly union jobs, or 20% of California's workforce specifically in manufacturing, energy production, and waste and water services. These are a high concentration of well-paying, blue collar union jobs in these sectors, and these jobs are disproportionately filled by men, Latinos and workers with a high school education according to the report.

To get some answers, the Green Jobs Coalition sponsored ACR 77 authored by Assembly Members Sandre Swanson and Tony Mendoza which asked the California Air Resources Board (CARB) some tough questions about what jobs would be created by AB 32, what jobs would be lost, and which industrial sectors would be impacted by these lost jobs.

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) effectively thumbed its nose at those of us supporting ACR 77. They failed to provide the detailed sector-specific job impacts and other answers that were requested, and which are necessary to fully understand the impacts of AB 32.

Fortunately, there have been others that have shed some light on the subject. The Legislative Analyst found, for example, that AB 32 would result in the loss of 120,000 jobs in the short term.

CARB's own economic experts also have recognized the fact that jobs will be lost because of AB 32. In fact, they recommend establishing a Worker Transition Program to provide assistance to people who lose their jobs because of AB 32 regulations.

In addition to lost jobs, California families would also face increased energy costs. According to these same CARB experts: AB 32 will cause California households to face higher prices both directly for electricity, natural gas, and gasoline, and indirectly as businesses pass costs for GHG reduction on to consumers.

I don't doubt that there will be more green jobs in California, perhaps even thousands of them. However, we don't want to put at risk the millions of well-paying, blue-collar jobs that put bread on the table right now. We need to make sure we do our homework, ask the tough questions and make adjustments as necessary to implement AB 32 in a way that reduces greenhouse gases without hurting millions of families in this state.

In these difficult times, California's working people deserve nothing less.

James W. Kellogg is the International Representative of the United Association of Journeyman and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry