



New York City Apollo Alliance

Convened by Urban Agenda



PRESS RELEASE

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THE NEW APOLLO PROGRAM, THE ECONOMIC STIMULUS AND NYC Public Forum Discusses How Federal Level Action Could Affect New Yorkers and the City

February 3, 2009, New York City – President Obama’s economic stimulus plan promises billions of dollars to slow the economic downturn and create jobs. New York City, which has been hit especially hard by the financial crisis is in urgent need of stimulus dollars to tackle a \$4 billion deficit and looming budget cuts that will severely affect healthcare, education, human services and the workforce. A public forum, convened yesterday by the New York City Apollo Alliance, examined areas that would most benefit from stimulus funding to ensure that the City becomes more economically, and environmentally, sustainable. NYC Apollo is urging that Congress pay particular attention to the *types* of jobs that will be generated as we move towards a ‘cleaner, greener’ economy.

“It’s not enough to just create ‘green’ jobs. We need ‘green collar’ jobs that pay family sustaining wages, provide benefits and offer opportunities for career advancement. Without this, we will see the emergence of an underclass of workers employed in green jobs, but unable to make their way into the middle class,” said Mijin Cha, director of campaign research at Urban Agenda, convener of NYC Apollo. Considering both environmental benefits, and wage and job standards would lead to jobs that will help the resurgence of the middle class, strengthen the economy and make New York City a leader in sustainability.

The point was underscored by Jerome Ringo, president of the national Apollo Alliance, a coalition of business, labor, environmental and community leaders promoting environmental stewardship, green collar job creation and energy security. He introduced the New Apollo Program, a bold economic investment plan that seeks to build on America’s strengths – ‘our infrastructure, workforce, entrepreneurship, and can-do spirit’. The plan has been gaining momentum in Washington since it was made public in September 2008 – “in fact, much of the federal stimulus package echoes what we’re saying,” said Ringo.

He described the New Apollo Program as a comprehensive strategy to move America toward climate stability, energy security, and economic prosperity. It scales up existing clean energy tools and practices, and creates or retains millions of jobs in a made-in-America clean energy economy. It invests in energy efficiency, conservation, clean fuels, rapid transit, next generation vehicles, advanced manufacturing, smart growth, and millions of made-in-America jobs. It also offers solutions for both the environmental and social justice movements, engaging strategies that will revitalize underserved communities and improve environmental health while helping low-income residents access the benefits of the clean energy economy – such as energy efficiency and job training programs.

“The nation is at a tipping point,” he said. “Our economy is experiencing a tectonic shift from one based on fossil fuels to an economy based on clean energy. Cities are at the center of this change. Much of what will happen will happen in cities – they have tremendous opportunity. Our cities must be sustainable, energy efficient and engage in smart growth planning while sharing prosperity among all their citizens.”

Steve McInnis, political director of the New York City District Council of Carpenters pointed to the fact that unions in this country are ‘first and foremost economic justice organizations’. “The move towards “green” building and jobs is another in a long series of employment opportunities that we are embracing. At the New York City District Council of Carpenters we are working with the U.S. Green Building Council to set up fundamentals for training in the emerging green economy,” he said. The program is helping to continue and expand current outreach programs like *Construction Skills*, which recruits recent New York City high school graduates, *Helmets to Hardhats* for returning veterans, and *Non-Traditional Employment for Women*, with whom the union has a long-standing relationship.

“It is the most marginalized sectors of our society that are impacted most in times of economic and social distress. Low-income communities of color must be a priority in this new stimulus package, and in the larger economic recovery efforts of the Obama Administration,” said Kellie Terry-Sepulveda, executive managing director of THE POINT, a community development group. “Communities like the South Bronx are disproportionately affected by a myriad of institutionalized barriers to sustainable, living wage employment, quality education and healthy environments. As it stands now, 42 percent of children in the Bronx live below the poverty line, and the South Bronx, one of the poorest congressional districts in the nation, is facing a 24 percent unemployment rate. Environmental justice communities need to be empowered to rebuild their communities.”

The NYC Apollo Alliance has come up with criteria for Congress to use that will help evaluate the economic and environmental impact of projects seeking federal funding. The criteria suggests focusing on employment that targets a wide spectrum of green collar workers from low-skilled to high-skilled; supporting local employment opportunities instead of outsourcing; promoting employment in environmentally sustainable areas such as building retrofits, brownfield redevelopment and urban forestry; and targeting the maintenance and retrofitting of existing public infrastructure, rather than building new systems.

“For example, a dollar-for-dollar match for state-approved energy efficiency programs could quickly channel funds to green collar jobs,” explained Cha. “For every \$1 invested in such programs, \$2-\$4 could typically be saved by lowering costs for consumers, and freeing up consumer purchasing power.”

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About the New York City Apollo Alliance

Established in 2004, the New York City Apollo Alliance is a coalition that brings together unions, environmentalists and environmental justice advocates, businesses, educators, and community-based organizations to advocate for public policies that maximize the economic development and job creation potential of greening New York City. The New York City Apollo Alliance is convened by Urban Agenda, a public policy, research and advocacy organization, working to build a socially, economically and environmentally just New York City.

For more information - <http://www.urbanagenda.org/nycapollo.htm>

About the Apollo Alliance

The Apollo Alliance is a coalition of business, labor, environmental, and community leaders working to catalyze a clean energy revolution in America to reduce our nation’s dependence on foreign oil, cut the carbon emissions that are destabilizing our climate, and expand opportunities for American businesses and workers. Inspired by the vision and technological achievements of the Apollo space program, we promote policies and initiatives to speed investment in clean energy technology and energy efficiency, put millions of Americans to work in a new generation of well-paid, green collar jobs, and make America a global leader in clean energy products and services.

For more information - <http://apolloalliance.org/>