

# Highlights from Buy Clean America: Building a Better Future for Our Workers, Industry, and Environment



**John Milko**

Climate and Industry Consultant, Climate and Energy Program

On Thursday, March 30, 2023, Third Way and the BlueGreen Alliance co-hosted an event to discuss the future of Buy Clean and industrial policy. Together speakers and panelists discussed how to leverage these policies to create good-paying jobs for middle-class families in communities across the country while addressing a major source of climate pollution.

Below are highlights from the speakers and panels:

Buy Clean America: Jason Walsh, Executive Director, BlueGreen Alliance



## **Jason Walsh, Executive Director, BlueGreen Alliance**

Jason Walsh set the stage by explaining how Buy Clean can create a “win-win” scenario that strengthens US manufacturing and addresses industrial climate pollution.

Buy Clean America: Administrator Robin Carnahan, General Services Administration



## **Administrator Robin Carnahan, General Services Administration**

In her remarks, **Administrator Carnahan** discussed the steps GSA is taking to implement ambitious but achievable Buy Clean targets as part of its strategy to decarbonize its 8,000-building nationwide portfolio. She touted Buy Clean and Buy American procurement policies as important pieces of a broader industrial investment strategy to create good-paying American jobs, lower energy costs, and address sources of climate change.



## **PANEL ONE | Buying Clean: Leveraging Federal Purchasing Power to Secure Climate and Economic Goals**

Members of the panel, moderated by **Abigail Regitsky** of Breakthrough Energy, spoke about the importance of aligning Buy Clean policies across federal agencies to provide a clear market signal, as well as the crucial need for external stakeholder input to set reasonable but ambitious standards that advance the Biden Administration's sustainability goals and bolster US industry. **Holly Elwood** of the Environmental Protection Agency discussed EPA's ongoing efforts to improve the lifecycle data quality of construction materials, provide technical assistance to manufacturers for the disclosure of product lifecycle emissions via environmental product declarations (EPDs), and establish an eco-label system to help purchasers identify low-carbon materials more easily. **Jetta Wong** of the General Services Administration stressed the importance of data transparency and how broad EPD creation among manufacturers will help GSA establish informed procurement specifications. **Andrew Wishnia** of the Department of Transportation explained how DOT is planning to include lifecycle emission data into its discretionary grant programs, incentivizing states to adopt cleaner procurement practices. **Trisha Miller** of the White House Climate Policy Office provided insight into how the Buy Clean Task Force is facilitating a whole-of-government approach to these efforts by helping to coordinate the clean procurement activities of 16 federal agencies that collectively account for 98% of all federally purchased concrete, steel, asphalt, and glass.

Buy Clean America: Kareem Hammoud, US Climate Alliance



## **PANEL TWO | Adopting Best Practices: State and Private Sector Buy Clean Efforts**

Moderator **Stacy Smedley** of Building Transparency kicked off the conversation about how state-level efforts and the private sector are working together to tackle deep decarbonization in industries like concrete, cement and steel. **Kareem Hammoud** of the US Climate Alliance talked about the enormous momentum at the state and municipal levels across the country for procurement policies that prioritize low embodied materials for public projects, including the 12 states that joined the Federal-State Buy Clean Partnership with the Biden Administration. **Scott Shell** of ClimateWorks discussed how states and cities can act as testing laboratories for strategies to reduce embodied carbon, including New York and New Jersey's Low Embodied Carbon Concrete Leadership Act (LECCLA) policies that provide financial incentives to continuously lower the embodied carbon of concrete used in public infrastructure projects. **Katie Ross** of Microsoft focused on implementing Buy Clean-like policies in the private sector, including the pioneering steps Microsoft took to reduce 30% of embodied carbon in its real estate portfolio, and the lessons learned from those efforts.

Senior Vice President Josh Freed Speaks on How Reducing Emissions Leads to Economic...



**Josh Freed, Senior Vice President for Climate and Energy, Third Way**

Josh Freed spoke about how the Biden Administration, with resources from Inflation Reduction Act, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and CHIPS and Science Act, is pursuing a climate and industrial strategy that prioritizes growth in manufacturing communities throughout the country. These efforts will provide US companies and workers the opportunity to lead the world in innovating and building the technologies on which the new clean energy economy will rely, revitalizing our manufacturing sector in the process.

White House National Climate Advisor Ali Zaidi Highlights the Crucial Nature of Buy Clean...



## **Ali Zaidi, White House National Climate Advisor**

Ali Zaidi spoke about the generational opportunity we have over the coming years to transform our industrial base in a way that addresses climate pollution while strengthening the competitive standing of American companies and workers. He emphasized three components of the Biden Administration's climate and industrial strategy: 1) Rebuild the manufacturing sector to support middle-class families, 2) Direct industrial investments to communities that have experienced economic hardship over the past several decades and watched manufacturing jobs disappear; and 3) Implement policies and resources effectively to ensure clean materials become the market standard. He explained that "this is our opportunity to bring in folks who thought climate was something coming for their jobs. Turns out, it's the thing that's going to make them competitive in the global marketplace."

Buy Clean America: Kevin Dempsey, American Iron and Steel Institute



## PANEL THREE | Transforming Industry: Capitalizing on Investments in Clean Manufacturing

Moderated by **Ben Beachy** of the BlueGreen Alliance, the third panel focused on the ways in which government policy and investment can spur technological advancement in the industrial sector, positioning American manufacturing companies and workers to succeed in meeting the increasing demand for cleaner products. **Christina Walrond** of the Department of Energy provided insight into how DOE is administering its historic \$6 billion program to decarbonize major portions of the industrial sector. **Kevin Dempsey** of the American Iron and Steel Institute discussed industry efforts to decarbonize steel production and how DOE investments will accelerate the adoption of requisite technologies like hydrogen direct reduced iron (DRI) and carbon, capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS). **Hebah Kassem** of the Sierra Club explained that demand and supply-side industrial investments offer opportunities to tackle climate challenges, provide good-paying jobs, and address legacy climate justice issues.

Senior Fellow Tim Ryan Speaks on Connecting the Working Class to the Clean Energy Tra...



## FIRESIDE CHAT | Connecting with Manufacturing Workers and their Communities

In the event's final discussion, **Tim Ryan**, former Ohio Congressman and current Third Way Senior Visiting Fellow, spoke to **Mike Williams** of the Center for American Progress about the impact of industrial policy on manufacturing workers and their communities. Ryan said, "We want workers to feel about this movement as they felt about the last industrial movement – that there was security, there was an opportunity to get into the middle class, there was dignity, there was a retirement." Ryan continued, "There was the Great American middle class that never happened before, and we need to make sure they know that this is an opportunity again."

**This is only a brief snapshot of topics addressed during the course of the event. To hear more, please view the full recording [here](#).**

For further reading on Buy Clean and industrial decarbonization policies and progress, please consult the resources below, provided by participating organizations.

- **Third Way.** Major Opportunity to “Buy Clean.”
- **BlueGreen Alliance.** Buy Clean, A Tool to Create Good Jobs, Cut Pollution, and Renew American Manufacturing
- **Environmental Protection Agency.** Inflation Reduction Act Programs to Fight Climate Change by Reducing Embodied Greenhouse Gas Emissions of Construction Materials and Products.
- **Department of Transportation.** Policy Statement on Buy Clean Initiative.
- **White House.** Federal Buy Clean Initiative.
- **Building Transparency.** How EC3 Supports Buy Clean Policies.
- **Microsoft.** Reducing Embodied Carbon in Construction.
- **United States Climate Alliance.** Enabling Industrial Decarbonization, A Policy Guidebook for U.S. States.
- **ClimateWorks.** How low-carbon cement can benefit emerging economies and the planet.
- **Department of Energy, Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations.** Funding Notice: Industrial Demonstrations.
- **American Iron and Steel Institute.** Buy Clean Policy Recommendations for Steel Products.
- **Sierra Club.** Why "Buy Clean" Policies Should Consider Toxic Pollutants (And Much More).

#### TOPICS

**CLEAN ENERGY INNOVATION 90**

**CARBON MANAGEMENT 67**