

Highlights from The American Jobs Plan: Opportunities for Advanced Nuclear and Union Workers



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The first advanced nuclear power plants are just years away from construction. With the right federal support, the U.S. can turn demonstration projects into a full-scale industry and tens of thousands of high-wage, high-skill, *union* jobs.

On Tuesday, June 22, 2021 Third Way hosted a discussion on how policies like those included in the American Jobs Plan can get one of the nation’s newest clean energy industries up and running, develop a domestic supply chain, and build on the nuclear sector’s strong record of supporting union workers in construction, manufacturing, engineering, and other important sectors. Speakers included industry experts, union leaders, and members of the Biden-Harris Administration on ways to advance America’s economic and workforce goals while delivering new tools to fight climate change.

You can watch the full event [here](#).

Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV)

Senator Joe Manchin on supporting America's nuclear energy



While **Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV)** could not attend the event live, he did send a video message reiterating his support for advanced nuclear and the tremendous potential it can bring to America's energy industry.

He referenced the Energy Act of 2020, which passed last December and will support DOE programs to protect existing plants, develop alternative fuels, and authorize the development of new reactors.

“I am committed to finding a bipartisan path forward to rebuild and advance our nation's energy infrastructure while creating high skilled union jobs that will help our economy grow while safeguarding our environment.”

He emphasized the importance of maintaining the existing nuclear fleet to continue supplying carbon-free energy, as well as the potential for advanced nuclear to support American manufacturing, construction, hydrogen production, and desalination, among other areas.

He praised the DOE and its National Labs for the research and support they provide to the nuclear field, as well as the public-private partnerships that help train workers for the next generation of nuclear technologies.

He closed with a note on the importance of nuclear energy to the country's global competitiveness.

“US innovation and our strong workforce are and shall remain our most important competitive advantage. The US must work with our allies and partners to develop a harmonized approach and framework for deploying reactors as well as offering competitive financing options that allows us to compete with Russia and China, and that will allow us to maintain our nuclear supply chain, create high-paying manufacturing jobs, and reassert US leadership.

Dr. Katy Huff

Acting Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Energy at the U.S. Department of Energy

Dr. Katy Huff discusses opportunities for union workers in advanced nuclear



Dr. **Katy Huff** formally opened the event by discussing the Biden-Harris Administration’s vision for the role of nuclear power in fulfilling its decarbonization goals while creating millions of jobs for American workers.

She first cited the importance of maintaining existing nuclear plants, which prevent almost 550 million metric tons of CO₂ every year and serve as our largest source of carbon-free electricity. She followed by citing the American Jobs Plans’ investment in advanced nuclear through the DOE’s Advanced Research Demonstration Program (ARDP), as well as the potential it creates for American workers through supply chain procurement.

“The US government is really well-positioned to leverage some of the procurement language in the American Jobs Plan that could allow the US government to be a first mover in small modular and microreactors.”

Dr. Huff stated that advanced reactor construction and deployment, and the nuclear supply chain supporting these activities, will require specialized high-skilled labor. She believes that the two advanced reactor demonstrations supported by the ARDP, for example, will pave the way toward advanced nuclear commercialization and widespread deployment across the US.

“As we look at nuclear and advanced nuclear, there are other industries we can leverage to save good-paying, high skilled union workers and bring them into our energy transition along with us.”

Timelines

Advanced Nuclear Demonstration Timeline



Dr. Baranwal, Chris Levesque, and J. Clay Sell all spoke about the expected timeframe for advanced reactors supported by the Advanced Reactor Demonstration Program to be market ready.

Mark McManus

General President, United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters

UA General President Mark McManus discusses workforce training



UA General President Mark McManus noted that nuclear power provides the perfect opportunity to put the UA's skilled workforce to work in the fields in which UA workers have a technical advantage.

"[Nuclear] is a tremendous opportunity for the UA, not only in man hours but also to bring safe, reliable power to North America."

He also touched on the workforce training that the UA is providing to its union members to equip them for next-generation nuclear jobs. The UA spends \$250 million a year on its training programs, investing in its roster that spans all 50 states and includes 274 local unions.

"In the last 5-10 years, about 90% of that [training] money was on apprentice training. Now, 75% is on that, but the other 25% is continuing education for the new technologies that are coming our way."

Dr. Rita Baranwal

Vice President of Nuclear and Chief Nuclear Officer, Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI)

Dr. Rita Baranwal discusses the benefits of existing & advanced nuclear



Dr. Rita Baranwal, former Assistant Secretary of Nuclear Energy at the Department of Energy and current VP of Nuclear and Chief Nuclear Officer at EPRI, reflected on the bipartisan support that advanced nuclear receives and how we can take advantage of such widespread support to unlock its full potential.

“When you look at just the technology and unwrap the politics around it, [advanced nuclear] is something that can indeed help states achieve their decarbonisation targets.”

She also emphasized the importance of maintaining the nuclear fleet in order to successfully launch advanced nuclear reactors.

“Maintaining our existing fleet is absolutely essential to being able to launch advanced reactors. Not only for the supply chain base that’s out there, but the knowledge transfer that’s going to be needed from the existing employee base to those who will begin to deploy advanced nuclear.”

Moreover, Dr. Baranwal provided insight into the workforce development training that EPRI is providing to the next generation of nuclear workers. EPRI, which offers more than 1,000 training classes both online and onsite, is expanding its platform to ensure training for advanced nuclear technology is comprehensive and can be applied across different sites and reactors.

Clay Sell

CEO, X-Energy

J. Clay Sell on advanced nuclear and union labor



X-Energy CEO J. Clay Sell referenced the siting of X-Energy's Xe-100 advanced nuclear plant, which will be constructed by local UA members in Washington. X-Energy's TriEnergy partnership in Richland, Washington is between Energy Northwest, which provides the site and operation, and Grant County Public Utility District. He even brought a model of one of the four Xe-100 modules that was rendered by members of the UA Local 598.

"It is indicative of the level of excitement and need that will be required for the nuclear buildout to occur. Local 598 has a tremendous training facility where they train many apprentices and journeymen to upgrade those skills, and it's those very skills we will need at a massive scale."

He emphasized the quality of skills that union workers bring to projects, which will be essential to deliver on advanced reactor builds throughout the U.S.

"I've already started talking with [UA] Local 598 about how we can build an expeditionary force of plumbers, welders, and pipefitters that will be able to go throughout the US to deploy these units as we build them out. It's a tremendous opportunity for labor, electricity, and for consumers of electricity."

Chris Levesque

President and CEO, TerraPower

Chris Levesque on siting of TerraPower Natrium reactor



TerraPower President and CEO Chris Levesque spoke about the siting of TerraPower's new Sodium advanced reactor, which will replace a retiring coal plant in Wyoming. Of the four coal plant candidate sites they're considering, all have union operators.

"We fully expect the construction project to be staffed by skilled, union labor. Workers can't always identify: what are the new jobs? In this case, we can show them: we will need welders, we will need pipefitters, and these projects are beginning now."

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