OBAMA-BIDEN TRANSITION PROJECT

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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TOP THREE ISSUES

1. NO CHILD LEFT INSIDE ACT

Seek passage of the No Child Left Inside Act to create $100 million in funding for state environmental literacy plans, teacher training, and increased access to quality environmental education experiences for all young people, and host a White House Conference on Connecting Kids to Nature to promote formal and nonformal environmental education, environmental justice education, physical activity, and direct nature experiences as instrumental avenues to raising well-rounded, healthy children.

2. NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION ACT

Support the reauthorization of the National Environmental Education Act (NEEA), which was passed in 1990 and provides the primary support for environmental education. It funds lifelong environmental education through the EPA and created the EPA Office of Environmental Education and the National Environmental Education Foundation. This legislation has helped build a more informed citizenry that has the skills and knowledge to respond to increasing environmental challenges—from the need for environmental regulation to how to address climate change. The Act needs to be revised and the authorization level needs to be substantially increased.

3. PRESIDENTIAL COMPREHENSIVE CLIMATE CHANGE EDUCATION AND READINESS INITIATIVE

Establish a Presidential Comprehensive Climate Change Education and Readiness Initiative and associated legislation to equip our American workforce with the necessary skills and knowledge for the new green economy through major adjustments to K-12 education, school-to-work programs, higher education, professional re-education, and consumer and public education.

KEY APPOINTMENT POSITIONS

- Senior Policy Advisor to the Secretary of Education, Environmental Education
- Environmental Education Advisor, Council of Environmental Quality
- Senior Policy Advisor to the Secretary of Commerce or Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
- Senior Policy Advisor to the Director of the US Peace Corps, Environmental Education and Sustainability

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STRENGTHEN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

BACKGROUND

The transition to a green economy presents a tremendous opportunity for those who embrace it - and a great risk for those who ignore it. Transforming our nation's economic, energy, and environmental systems to move towards a green economy will require a level of expertise, innovation, and cooperation unseen since the 1940s.

America needs major new investments in our educational infrastructure to overcome these challenges, reclaim our economic competitiveness, and return us from the brink of catastrophe from global warming. At the same time, it has been well proven that an investment in education and innovation - in human capital - is without a doubt the best investment that can be made for long-term, across-the-board economic growth.

This transition will require a major job training and education effort on the part of business, government, and educational institutions. But green manufacturing workforce development programs are just a piece of what is needed; the green economy will not be driven by manufacturing workers alone. Architects, engineers, planners, scientists, business managers, financial experts, lawyers, entrepreneurs, political leaders, and many others will all be needed to develop a green economy. In short, we must have a broad base of educated citizens who understand the connections between economics, the environment, and social well-being.

To prepare Americans for the transition to a green economy, new investments are needed:

- to retool our nation's universities and colleges as centers of research, education and workforce training in green economy-related fields,
- to restructure K-12 education by bolstering environmental education and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education to provide students with a basic understanding of the relationships between environmental, economic and social systems,
- to bolster existing school-to-work programs to provide disconnected young people with educational and work options through new initiatives like a Climate Conservation Corps,
- to provide more opportunities for under-served audiences to take part in high-quality environmental education programming, and
- to mount major public education programs to sensitize the public and to develop educated consumers.

Public investment in education for a green economy will more than pay for itself, just as the post-Sputnik education programs did in the 1950s and '60s. Today, a similar investment would equip a new generation of Americans with the highest caliber human capital, inspire them to tackle the green economy as their generational undertaking, and pave the way for new industries and technologies.

Federal agencies involved in environmental education: Department of Education, CEQ, EPA, NOAA, Department of Energy, Department of Interior (BLM, FWS, NPS), USDA (Forest Service), and NASA

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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS - ADMINISTRATIVE

1. **Executive Order Improving School Performance through Environmental Education**

   Issue an Executive Order directing the Department of Education to place high priority on environmental education curriculum that integrates science, math, social studies, economics, and outdoor and service learning. Research shows that environmental education increases performance and test scores in primary and secondary schools, particularly in the areas of science and math.

   Responsible Officials: The President, Chairman, CEQ, Secretary of Department of Education

2. **Federal Resource Agency Directive on Climate Literacy**

   Direct all federal resources agencies to develop and conduct climate literacy training for all personnel to familiarize them with challenges, needs, and appropriate responses for each agency. Identify specific needs for professional training and capacity building.

   Responsible Officials: Secretary of Education, Chairman, CEQ

3. **White House Conferences on Healthier, Greener Communities and Connecting People to Nature**

   Launch a White House initiative focused on creating green communities that promote ecological integrity, social equity, economic well being, and health. Conference themes, co-sponsored with key federal agencies, would focus on how to connect kids to nature to improve the wellbeing and competitiveness of American youth, building a more equitable and green economy, support service learning to engage youth in greening the community, and promote social equity to create more sustainable communities. As part of this initiative, each Conference would facilitate collaboration across sectors and focus on how to eliminate barriers, support research, and promote innovative solutions.

   Responsible Officials: Secretary of Education, Chairman, CEQ

4. **National Goal of 100% of New School Construction and Rehabilitation to meet "Green Schools" Standards by 2012**

   Declare a Department of Education policy to support a national goal that 100 percent of newly constructed or rehabilitated schools to become "Green Schools" to lower energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions, and provide opportunities for formal and nonformal environmental education.

   Responsible Official: Secretary of Education

5. **Executive Order to Create a Presidential Commission on Americans and the Great Outdoors**

   Issue an Executive Order to launch a third Presidential Commission to explore American's connection to the great outdoors, building upon the President's Commission on American's Outdoors (PACO – 1987) and the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC – 1962). A major focus of the Commission will be to study ways to bolster environmental education and connecting people to nature.

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Responsible Officials: the President, CEQ Chairman, Secretary of Education, Secretary of the Interior, Secretary of Agriculture, Secretary of Commerce (NOAA)

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS - LEGISLATIVE

1. No Child Left Inside Act

Include the No Child Left Inside Act in the Administration's Congressional recommendations to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to support teacher training, improve student achievement and health, prepare youth for the workplace, address environmental justice, and ensure every student graduates from high school environmentally literate. The House passed a modified version of the bill by a bipartisan vote of 293-109 in September, 2008. Provide incentives for federal land management agencies to partner with local and state education agencies.

Responsible Official: Secretary of Education

2. National Environmental Education Act (NEEA)

Support the reauthorization of the NEEA, which passed in 1990 and provides the primary support for environmental education. It funds lifelong environmental education through the EPA and created the Office of Environmental Education and the National Environmental Education Foundation. It provides capacity building, training, and a national and regional grant program. If there is going to be a responsive citizenry for environmental regulation and climate change, there must be a mechanism to educate the public. The authorization needs a serious modernization and an increase in authorization levels.

Responsible Official: Secretary of Education

3. National 21st Century High-Performing Public School Facilities Act

Support the National 21st Century High-Performing Public School Facilities Act, H.R. 3021, which passed the House by a vote of 250 to 164. The bill would create new funding administered by the Department of Education to help public k-12 school systems across the country reduce energy costs and carbon emissions through green building design while funding essential and long overdue repairs and upgrades. The legislation should be modified to promote formal environmental education, focus on the relationships between a healthy environment and healthy communities, improve and enhance schoolyard environments to create greener and healthier schools for students of all ages.

Responsible Official: Secretary of Education

4. Comprehensive Climate Change Education and Readiness Bill

Promote a comprehensive climate change education bill to advance education for a green economy through major adjustments to K-12 education, school-to-work programs, higher education, professional re-education, and consumer and public education, in order to equip our American workforce and citizenry with the needed skills and knowledge to maximize environmental and economic gains in the transition to a green economy.

Responsible Official: Secretary of Education

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5. Launch a Climate Conservation Corps

Recommend legislation to implement a 21st Century "Climate Conservation Corps" focused on energy conservation measures to help consumers save money, protect natural resources and biological systems from a changing climate, and educate Americans about climate change. Modeled after the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps that lifted three million unemployed Americans out of poverty, this new Climate Conservation Corps will create jobs, help the nation lower energy bills, and create more resilient natural systems.

Responsible Officials: Secretary of Education, Administrator, EPA, Chairman, CEQ, Director, OMB

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS - BUDGETARY

1. No Child Left Inside

Support a $100 million authorization and funding for the proposed No Child Left Inside Act, which would promote formal environmental education opportunities for K-12 schools through grants for state environmental literacy plans, teacher training, and capacity building.

Responsible Officials: Secretary of Education, Director, OMB

2. National Environmental Education Act (NEEA)

Fund the NEEA at $14 million and support an increase in the funding level through reauthorization. For eight consecutive years the Bush administration zeroed support for this fundamental public program to promote understanding of environmental issues, laws, and behaviors. This funding, which costs a mere three cents for every American, must be fully supported by the new Administration to make America more competitive, help Americans transition to the new green economy, and to prevent environmental education from being pushed out of the classroom. Current authorization allows for 14 million per year. FY08 funding at $9 million; FY09 and FY10 request is for $14 million.

Responsible Officials: Secretary of Education, Director, OMB

3. University Sustainability Program

Fully fund the new University Sustainability Program (formerly the Higher Education Sustainability Act), which has the potential to significantly accelerate the green economy transition by graduating a generation of students who understand the fundamentals of a green economy and has broad support within higher education. Newly authorized program; FY09 request is $50 million.

Responsible Officials: Secretary of Education, Director, OMB

4. NOAA education programs

Double the modest current funding for NOAA's Education Initiatives (which include the Environmental Literacy Grants program) to enable the Office of Education to implement the education recommendations of the U.S. Ocean Action Plan, and continue the expansion begun by Congress of the BWET (Bay Watershed Education and Training) grant programs to currently unserved regions including the Great Lakes, Southeast, Alaska, and Mississippi River basin. FY09 funding was at: $14.6 million; FY09 and FY 10funding request is for $24 million.

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Responsible Officials: Secretary of Education, Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, Director, OMB

5. **Green Schools Goal**

According to the U.S. Green Building Council, if all new school construction and school renovations went green starting today, energy savings alone would total $20 billion over the next 10 years. Green schools typically cost less than $3 per square foot more to build, an investment that is paid back within a few years of operation. According to data from the construction industry, "K-12 green construction" is the fastest growing sector across the country. Also fully fund the newly-authorized Energy Sustainability and Efficiency Grants and Loans program, which provides loans and grants for renewable energy and energy efficiency projects at higher education institutions, public schools, and local governments. New program, FY09 and FY10 funding request is $250 million for grants program and $500 million for loan program.

THE FIRST 100 DAYS

To highlight the President's leadership on environmental education, the First 100 Days could include any of the following:

- **Green Jobs and Green Education Stimulus Package Launch at a Community College.** Environmental education is the cornerstone of our new clean energy future. An economic stimulus package with a focus on green jobs and green education would help Americans of all ages, all backgrounds, and all walks of life transition to the green economy. A community college would be a powerful venue for this announcement. This initiative could include the creation of Climate Change Centers of Excellence at key universities across the country to promote broad public understanding of our new green economy. The President could also announce his full support for the Higher Education Sustainability Summit authorized by the Higher Education Act (PL 110-315) to ensure that higher education prepares the next generation to combat global warming. This green stimulus package could also promote a dramatic investment in climate change education and a Climate Conservation Corps, focused on new job creation, public understanding of energy conservation to reduce energy bills, and work projects to promote natural resources adaptation to global warming.

- **Green Schools Initiative.** Excessive heating and cooling bills hurt many school budgets across the country. The President could unveil a new national Green Schools goal to promote green design in new school construction and rehabilitation projects. This initiative would save millions of dollars in energy costs to local schools, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and provide more opportunities for environmental education.

- **No Child Left Inside Event**. The President and the Secretary of Education could support inclusion of the No Child Left Inside Act in the Administration's proposed legislation to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The President could issue a proclamation for "No Child Left Inside Days," to draw attention to the benefits of outdoor and

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environmental education in our nation's schools. The announcement could take place on the White House lawn as local K-12 students participate in hands-on environmental education activities with their teachers and would involve federal land management agencies and national conservation groups.

- **White House Conference on Greener, Healthier Communities and Connecting People to Nature**. The President could launch a White House initiative focused on creating green communities that promote ecological integrity, social equity, economic well being, and health. Conference themes could focus on how to connect kids to nature, building a more equitable and green economy, and promoting social equity to create more sustainable communities.

- **Presidential Commission on Americans and the Great Outdoors**. The President could launch a 21st Century commission on Americans and the Outdoors to explore Americans' connections with nature, the quality of our federal conservation and recreation programs, the importance of conservation to public health, the quality of environmental education systems, and the benefits of conservation to our economy.