

**Statement of Terence M. O'Sullivan,
General President, Laborers' International Union of North America,
Press Conference on Making Green Jobs Good Jobs
Tuesday, February 3, 2009**

News media contact: Jacob Hay, (202) 942-2285, (202) 445-4788, jhay@liuna.org.

On behalf of LIUNA - the Laborers' International Union of North America - a half-million men and women who get up every morning to go to work building America, I'm honored to be here.

I want to thank the elected leaders, business leaders, environmental leaders and working people who are here today or who have made it possible to prepare and release this important new report.

LIUNA is proud to join with the Teamsters Union, with Change to Win and the Sierra Club to release *High Road or Low Road -- Job Quality in the New Green Economy*. This is a significant piece of new research which starkly poses the choice our nation faces as we invest for the future.

We can seize the promise of the green economy, a future for our country and a future for our world based on prosperity and a mutual shared interest. Or, as this report warns, we can ignore the potential pitfalls of a green economy that purports to take care of the Earth – but neglects the people on it.

High Road or Low Road? Job Quality in the New Green Economy is a detailed and well-documented examination of how a green economy can build America with good jobs that create wealth and protect the Earth and in fact, as the report outlines, it is what many unions, businesses and environmental advocates are already doing.

But this report also shows how green jobs, if not true to their purpose, can drive down our economy, impoverish families and put prosperity out of reach.

As a side note, it should come as no surprise that unions and advocates for the environment are united behind a green economy that creates and defends family-supporting jobs. The time is long past when jobs can be used as a sword of division between those who care about working families and those who care about the environment.

Too often in the past corporations told unions to choose between jobs and a clean environment.

Good jobs and good environmental practices are no longer a weapon to divide us; they are a bridge that unites us.

We are actively engaged with the Sierra Club and others such as the Blue Green Alliance and the Apollo Alliance. LIUNA is a union whose members are already building green, by gearing up training programs for home weatherization and retrofitting commercial buildings, by helping to build wind farms. Our skilled and trained members work to remove asbestos and lead and by cleaning up hazardous waste.

We know green jobs don't just help the planet, they can help working families live a middle-class life and attain the American Dream. As this report shows, workers making minimum wage and worried about heating their homes can't be worried about global warming and won't be buying hybrid cars.

Today you'll hear from Pierritte_Hopkins, who is a LIUNA member in Newark, New Jersey. Pierritte is ready, willing and able to do the work of green construction – and she knows first-hand the difference between a family-supporting job and a job that drives down living standards.

And in this new report, you'll learn about truck drivers who service America's ports and help the global economy run. But because poverty wages prevent them from adequately maintaining their rigs, they are releasing excessive exhaust into the air and nearby communities. Those 90,000 truck drivers are struggling to join together with the Teamsters Union, and when they succeed they'll improve their jobs and the environment.

The bottom line is this: If it doesn't put green in working people's pockets, it is not a green collar job. If it doesn't enlarge and strengthen the middle class, it's not a green collar job. If it doesn't ensure workers get respect, receive good benefits, and have the freedom to choose to join a union – it's not a green collar job, it's just another job like those typical of the Bush era that have driven our economy, our country and the world to new lows.

In this report, you will learn about the partnership with companies like Gamesa and Girding Edlen Development. They're companies that value their relationship with unions. They're building the green economy with green collar jobs – and making a fair profit.

You'll learn about the solar and wind industry, but also about manufacturers, waste management companies and other construction contractors – some of which prove the promise of a green economy, but too many of which are simply unscrupulous employers taking advantage of working people just as they are taking advantage of the environmental crisis.

We believe a green economy with real green collar jobs can help President Obama and our country get our economy moving now – and keep it moving for generations to come.

But we will only succeed if we make sure that the people who build the green economy and keep it running have jobs that allow them to fully participate in that economy.

The key is standards. For a green economy to succeed, for it to help build America so America works, it must put green in our communities and in the pockets of working people.

Green jobs must:

- Include training that opens the door to new any future opportunities
- The must expand the use of project labor agreements so that projects are completed on time and within budget, and that workers are receiving family-supporting pay.
- They must include healthcare benefits so that green construction doesn't make the health care crisis worse.

It's simple: As taxpayers invest in the green economy, our government is obligated to ensure that our investment supports communities and families.

I want to introduce Pierriette Hopkins, the first member LIUNA Local 55, a new local union in the residential construction industry in Newark, New Jersey. Ms. Hopkins was one of many LIUNA members who recently completed a pilot project weatherizing homes in Newark.

###

The members of LIUNA – the Laborers' International Union of North America – are on the forefront of the construction industry, a powerhouse of workers who are proud to build America.

To learn more about LIUNA's Build America, so America Works - a long-term effort to make taking care of America's basics a national priority - go to www.LiunaBuildsAmerica.org.