

For Immediate Release

June 29, 2020

Contact: Trey Pollard
tpollard@justtransitionfund.org

(202) 904-9187

Angel Amaya

aamaya@worc.org

(361) 779-2572

Coal Community Leaders Release Historic Platform for National Economic Transition

Built on Community-Driven Solutions by Local, Tribal, and Labor Leaders, NET Platform Pushes For Bold Investments in National Transition Program For Those Hit Hardest by Changing Coal Economy

[READ THE PLATFORM HERE](#)

NATIONWIDE – Today, 80 local, regional, and national organizations and leaders unveiled their [National Economic Transition \(NET\) platform](#) to give federal and national leaders and policymakers the framework for an ambitious national transition program that supports the people and places hit hardest by the changing coal economy.

This NET platform was crafted by local, tribal, and labor leaders living and working in coal communities, along with non-profit sector partners, during a year-long collaboration led by the [Just Transition Fund](#). Amid the sharp decline of the coal sector over the past decade, these community leaders have already developed and implemented local policy solutions that help tackle the climate crisis and spur inclusive, equitable, and sustainable economic growth in places that once relied on coal. The NET platform presents national leaders with a path to scale up these solutions in coal communities across the country by making a big, bold investment in the platform's proposed comprehensive national transition program that, when implemented, will create vibrant, resilient, inclusive communities.

This year, U.S. coal consumption is set to [decline by more than 23 percent](#) and the closure of more coal facilities will likely be [accelerated by COVID-19 and the economic decline](#). As a result, communities that once relied on coal, like coal mining communities in Appalachia, the Illinois Basin, Montana, Wyoming and elsewhere as well as communities with coal fired power plants from the Navajo Nation to Central Minnesota all face a potentially devastating crisis. This crisis could mean more job losses, the further erosion of the tax base, and cuts to vital services layered on in places already struggling following previous recessions amid decades of inequality and widespread poverty. This perilous situation makes challenges for low-income communities, communities of color, and tribal communities already disproportionately left behind by the status quo even more significant.

As the national conversation continues to focus on economic development, racial inequity, and the climate crisis, the NET platform gives leaders the opportunity to help address these serious challenges in coal communities by enacting solutions that local leaders already know work.

To address these crises from Appalachia to the Navajo Nation, the NET platform urges national leaders to invest in the development of a national transition program built on seven pillars of policy recommendations that put communities in the driver's seat, including proposals to:

- Develop local leadership and capacity to lead the transition – especially Black, brown, women, and Indigenous-led organizations and community members
- Support local small businesses and entrepreneurship
- Provide a bridge for workers to quality, family-sustaining jobs
- Reclaim, remediate, and reuse coal sites

- Improve physical and social infrastructure, including public health and education systems
- Hold coal companies accountable during bankruptcies
- Create entities to coordinate transition-related programs and equip communities with the resources they need.

The full platform and executive summary can be found [here](#).

Recognizing the community-driven innovation on transition solutions and the need for a coordinated national transition program, the Just Transition Fund launched the NET project in early 2019. With the facilitation of Dialogue + Design Associates, a community engagement and design firm, A diverse planning team of representatives from coal communities across the country worked to draft this platform and refine it over the course of a year through an extensive idea-generation and feedback-gathering process. That process included a series of in-depth interviews with community leaders and members of coal-impacted communities, an in-person meeting of coal community and transition leaders in June of 2019, three regional stakeholder meetings in Appalachia, the Midwest, and the West, and a digital engagement campaign to gather input from the broader public from coal-affected regions in the fall of 2019.

Organizations and individuals endorsing [the platform](#) include:

Appalachian Citizens' Law Center	Labor Network for Sustainability
Appalachian Sustainable Development	Livelihoods Knowledge Exchange Network
Appalachian Voices	Metro East Green Alliance
Michael L. Bentley, EdD, <i>Salem, VA</i>	Mayor Mark Mills, <i>Coshocton, OH</i>
Better Building Institute Inc.	Mountain Association for Community Economic Development
Fritz Boettner, <i>West Virginia</i>	Native Renewables
BlueGreen Alliance	New Energy Economy
Center for Coalfield Justice	Northern Plains Resource Council
Center for Energy and Environment	Ohio Citizen Action
Central Appalachian Network	Ohio Consumers Power Alliance
Citizens Climate Lobby West Virginia	Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition
Greg Pruszinske, City of Becker, MN	Partnership for Responsible Growth
Climate Institute	Ty Pell, Adams County Commissioner, <i>Adams County, OH</i>
Coalfield Development	People Incorporated of Virginia
Colorado AFL-CIO	Plenty Doors Community Development Corporation
Colorado Farm and Food Alliance	Policy Matters Ohio
Community for Sustainable Energy	Powder River Basin Resource Council
Community Foundation for the Alleghenies	Prairie Rivers Network
Sylvia Crum	Renewable Northwest
Dakota Resource Council	Rural Action
Delta Institute	San Juan Citizens Alliance
Dine' Citizens Against Ruining our Environment	
Louise Dunlap, <i>Maryland</i>	
Earthworks	

Eastern Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation	Sequestering Carbon, Accelerating Local Economies
Eco-Justice Collaborative	Sheep Mountain Alliance
Energy Efficient West Virginia	Solar United Neighbors
Larry Evans	Jessica Stago, <i>Winslow, AZ</i>
Faith in Place Action Fund	The Climate Economy Education Inc
Diane Fong, <i>Bay City, MI</i>	Tó Nizhóní Ání
Foundation for PA Watersheds	Tribe Awaken
Generation West Virginia	Union of Concerned Scientists
Greater Ohio Policy Center	Utah Clean Energy
Green West Strategies	Utility Workers Union of America, AFL-CIO
Healthy Environment Alliance of Utah	Virginia Organizing
Dr. David W. Inouye, <i>College Park, MD</i>	West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy
JASenergies	West Virginia Rivers Coalition
Lou Ann Jessee-Wallace, <i>Russell County, VA</i>	Western Clean Energy Campaign
Just Transition Fund	Western Colorado Alliance
Kentuckians for the Commonwealth	Western Organization of Resource Councils
Keystone Research Center	Western Resource Advocates
	Randall A. Wilson, <i>Kentucky</i>

The following community organizations and NET partners released statements in support of the NET platform and are available to discuss its release:

—
Jeanie Alderson, Birney, Montana – Rancher and Board Chair of [Northern Plains Resource Council](#)

"Rural Montana has gone through so many boom-and-bust cycles, and we're seeing the coal industry bust again. This means lay-offs and lost income for many of my neighbors, and big cuts to local government budgets, not to mention the emotional toll of so much sudden loss and change. The only way to mitigate these impacts is by investing in the real, long-term strengths of each place: the people, the land, our local institutions, and the economic sectors that don't rely on coal. This platform is a call to action to ensure that our communities aren't punished for our country's reliance on coal now that the transition is here. And I believe that these investments will help Montana coal communities weather this storm and thrive into the future."

Contact: Dustin Ogden, Northern Plains Resource Council, [406-248-1154](tel:406-248-1154) x 114

—
Heidi Binko, Executive Director, [Just Transition Fund](#)

"From Appalachia to western tribal lands, the families and workers in America's coalfields and coal plants fueled the greatest economic expansion our country has ever witnessed. As coal declines, these communities deserve the investment they need to make a just and fair transition to a brighter economic future. Created by a diverse set of local leaders from all around the country, the NET platform presents an ambitious path forward for America's transitioning coal communities. As the pandemic hastens coal's

decline, there's no time to waste. Federal decision-makers must embrace this plan, invest in our transitioning coal communities, and help families and workers build a brighter future."

Contact: Trey Pollard, tpollard@justtransitionfund.org, 202-904-9187

—

Roger Carver, Nucla, Colorado – Retired coal miner and former president of UMW Local Union 1281, and member of the [Western Colorado Alliance](#).

"As a former coal miner and resident of a coal community dealing with the closing of both a plant and mine, I support the National Economic Transition Platform. It will help accelerate economically depressed coal communities like Nucla forward into the future. We have to start moving forward, not backwards, and invest in a better future for all and the next generations. The sooner we act on these ideas the better."

Contact: Emily Hornback, Western Colorado Alliance, 207-329-0322

—

Veronica Coptis, Executive Director, [Center for Coalfield Justice](#)

"Coal communities like ours have been historically neglected by everybody. We were already facing the challenges of a changing coal economy when COVID-19 hit; now we're facing a pandemic and an urgent economic crisis on top of it. Many of us already weren't on equal footing after decades of inequality and widespread poverty. The NET platform is based on community-driven solutions from those of us who know what we need because we live here. These are solutions that create inclusive, equitable, and sustainable economic growth, driven from the ground up. Now we need a federal government committed to investing in our community-driven solutions. This platform gives federal and national leaders the framework to develop a program for the just and equitable national transition that our communities need and deserve."

Contact: veronica@coalfieldjustice.org

—

Brandon Dennison, CEO, [Coalfield Development](#)

"The NET platform represents a bold vision for coal communities across the country. This vision came to be from the bottom up, unlike so many other top-down policy efforts of year's past. Coal communities can be the leader of our country's transition to a newer, cleaner, fairer economy. All we need is investment to do so. NET represents the best chance yet to position our communities as the vanguard of the climate resilient economy our planet desperately needs."

Contact: bdennison@coalfield-development.org

—

Joyce Evans, Fort Laramie, Wyoming – Vice Chair of [Powder River Basin Resource Council](#)

"Anyone in Wyoming who wants to receive an education, preschool through graduate levels, is attending a system funded by coal. Anyone who works here, whether it be in transportation or mental health, is benefiting from coal dollars. State pensions are funded by coal and other mineral extraction. Coal has paid for our rodeos and our community centers. Coal funds emergency requests I, as the mayor of a tiny town in eastern Wyoming, make to the state for a new water pump for our municipal water system. And, now, coal is disappearing. When I read the NET Platform, I thought, here, at last, is a sensible plan that respects the resources, the diversity of needs, and the human communities that have been impacted so long by coal. This is a re-investment system where tax dollars already paid are put back into those places

that now need them. It is only right that places and people that give their all for generations to power our country are restored to whole."

Contact: Jill Morrison, Powder River Basin Resource Council, 307-751-5574

Peter Hille, President, Mountain Association for Community Economic Development (MACED)

"As we look to build a new economy in the coalfields of Eastern Kentucky, we know there's no one-size-fits-all solution. We have to try a lot of different things and connect them in ways that work. And, now with the ongoing impact from the collapse of coal and the economic fallout from a pandemic, we can't afford to wait any longer. The National Economic Transition platform captures community-driven solutions from our region, and beyond, and serves as a practical guide for political leaders to reinvest in our coal communities in a just and equitable way."

Contact: (859) 986-2373, peter@maced.org

Jeremy Richardson, Senior Energy Analyst, [Union of Concerned Scientists](#)

"Hardworking families deserve a fighting chance to be a part of the emerging clean energy economy. Coal production and consumption is changing in this country, and already struggling coal workers and coal communities will be left deep in crisis without real leadership from all levels of government combined with strong, sustained federal investments. The National Economic Transition platform gives policymakers a roadmap to community-led solutions, and they must take notice."

Contact: Ashanti Washington, 202-710-6946, awashington@ucsusa.org

Natalie Roper, Executive Director, [Generation West Virginia](#)

"At Generation West Virginia, we see the impacts of the declining coal economy as too many young West Virginians feel like they have to leave the state for opportunities, or they struggle to create the lives here that they deserve. In our work throughout the state, we see young people who are stepping up to build thriving and equitable communities where they can choose to stay. We know a different future is possible. By signing on to the National Economic Transition platform, we encourage our national leaders to invest in and support these pillars that represent these local visions that we are inspired by each day."

Contact: natalie@generationwv.org

James Slevin, President, [Utility Workers Union of America, AFL-CIO](#)

"Coal plant closures are changing regions and ways of life too rapidly for small communities to adapt on their own. Using the Just Transition Fund's National Economic Transition (NET) framework offers lawmakers and community leaders an inclusive, community-driven approach to address this urgent crisis. Tens of millions of people in these communities are depending on us now to make the bold political and economic investment to get this transition right."

Contact: Erin Bzymek, 202-702-9655, ebzymek@uwua.net

Lou Ann Wallace, St. Paul, Va., District II Russell County Board of Supervisors, Virginia

"Communities in Virginia's Great Southwest have been working diligently for years to bring new economic opportunities to our region. We've taken great pride in powering America for generations, and we believe that Federal commitments and investment will bring our new vision to fruition. This new way of thinking and working will once again bring employment opportunities back to the Heart of the Appalachian Mountains."

—

Jason Walsh, Executive Director, [BlueGreen Alliance](#)

"We are already in the midst of an energy transition and the Trump administration's denial of that is only harming those already struggling. Working people should not have to suffer economically due to the shift to cleaner, cheaper forms of energy, but a transition that is fair for workers and communities isn't something that will just happen organically. Prioritizing workers and communities in coal-impacted communities needs to be a deliberate choice. A fair and equitable transition and the creation of good-paying, union jobs need to be baked into our solutions on climate change, this platform presents a path forward to do just that."

Contact: Abby Harvey, aharvey@bluegreenalliance.org, 202-709-5113

—

Adam Wells, Wise County, Va. – Regional Director of Community and Economic Development, [Appalachian Voices](#)

"An equitable, sustainable economic transition won't happen on its own or overnight, in Appalachia or anywhere else. Deliberate, bold and swift interventions at a national scale are absolutely necessary. If we do this right, the communities and workers that gave the most in the fossil fuel based economy of the last century will be among the first to benefit from the emerging new economy; failure is not an option."

Contact: 804-240-4372, adam@appvoices.org

—