



# NATIONAL SKILLS COALITION

Every worker. Every industry.  
A strong economy.

1250 Connecticut Ave., NW  
Suite 200  
Washington DC, 20036

P 202.223.8991  
[nationalskillscoalition.org](http://nationalskillscoalition.org)

June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Ms. Susan Rice  
Director  
Domestic Policy Council  
The White House

Mr. Brian Deese  
Director  
National Economic Council  
The White House

Dear Ms. Rice and Mr. Deese:

Thank you for the leadership you have both shown in President Biden's effort to "build back better" in a manner that includes everyone, particularly those low-wage workers and workers of color who have been excluded from our nation's economic prosperity in the past. As you continue to work with Members of Congress—including the bi-partisan group of Senators who have proposed a recent infrastructure compromise—National Skills Coalition implores you to **not separate the physical investments in bricks and steel from the human investments in the training of the unemployed people who should be helping to build these projects.**

President Biden's American Jobs Plan made this vital connection between human and physical capital by linking its infrastructure proposals to a \$100 billion investment in workforce training. This would allow workers most impacted by the COVID recession, including those laid off from sectors like retail and hospitality or living in struggling communities, to be among those employed in the jobs created by these investments.

Unfortunately, **the current bi-partisan infrastructure proposal has removed all workforce training from its package even though there is still nearly \$1 trillion of investment in transportation, broadband, water and energy projects.** Past federal infrastructure and surface transportation initiatives have demonstrated that unless there is hard-wired funding for local worker training provided alongside the capital project funding itself, those not already employed in these sectors will rarely be trained for hire on these projects. At best, some local people may be temporarily hired for some lower-skilled positions, but their employment typically ends when the project is over. They've not been trained for the better-paying jobs on these projects, nor have they been prepared for a long-term career in that sector.

Earlier this year National Skills Coalition convened an [Infrastructure Industry Recovery Panel](#) of leading business leaders, labor management partnerships, local government officials, community organizations and community colleges versed in the workforce development needs of the construction, transportation, clean energy and public utility sectors. Among the Panel's [policy recommendations to the Biden administration and Congress](#) was to **make sure workforce development funding was not separated from the funding for the local planning, bidding and construction of federal infrastructure projects.** Workforce funding connected to project funding, along with possible bidding incentives, could make it easier for these contracts to be awarded to local industry partnerships of employers and other stakeholders who are committed to providing pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship and other training to local residents as part of their bid.

The American people strongly support this notion. [84% say](#) Congress should make major investments in infrastructure to stimulate the economy and create jobs, and that those jobs should be accessible to people in their communities. Overwhelming majorities want any public infrastructure plan to include investments in training (89%) and support services like childcare and transportation (84%). What's more, this support is **strongly bi-partisan**, and as such could easily be added to a bi-partisan proposal like that one currently being considered by the President. Indeed, there are **both Republican and Democratic Senators in the bi-partisan group** who have advocated for the inclusion of workforce training and partnerships in past infrastructure proposals.

President Biden has pledged that his proposed infrastructure investments will serve people of color, women, and other communities who have historically been excluded from good careers in infrastructure. Industries hardest hit by the pandemic, like hospitality and retail, employ large percentages of these populations. Any worker from these sectors seeking to change careers, especially to one in infrastructure, will need significant retraining to do so.

As you continue to progress towards a bipartisan infrastructure investment, National Skills Coalition urges you to invest in people-centered infrastructure. Thank you for your attention to these important issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andy Van Kleunen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Andy Van Kleunen  
Chief Executive Officer

c.c., Pronita Gupta (DPC), Seth Harris (NEC), Harin Contractor (NEC)