

## Everything's at Stake in the Climate Crisis and Labor Can Be Part of the Solution

In a recent *New York Magazine* piece, David Wallace-Wells summed up what is at stake for present and future generations with regard to climate change in the wake of a stark report from the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change:

Hundreds of millions of lives are at stake, the report declares, should the world warm more than 1.5 degrees Celsius, which it will do as soon as 2040, if current trends continue. Nearly all coral reefs would die out, wildfires and heat waves would sweep across the planet annually, and the interplay between drought and flooding and temperature would mean that the world's food supply would become dramatically less secure. Avoiding that scale of suffering, the report says, requires such a thorough transformation of the world's economy, agriculture, and culture that "there is no documented historical precedent."

The real kicker is that, as the UN report notes, "even with the pledged emission cuts under the Paris Agreement, the world is nowhere near achieving the volume of necessary cuts. To do so, we would need 'rapid and far-reaching transitions' across the entire global economy, including changes in the way we source and use energy, how we use land and grow food, and what types and quantities of food and materials we consume."

Clearly, our situation is dire. As Governor Brown famously said, "We're talking about extinction here." But as grim as our reality is, the good news is that here in California, we can do something about it. Now is not the time to sit on the sidelines. Instead labor needs to help fight for a sustainable future starting in California that will insure that union workers are *at* the table fighting for climate justice rather than *on* the menu fighting a losing battle against the changes we need to make.

In fact, with the passage of SB 100, California is on the road to a 100% carbon-free energy future. With that in mind, Labor is in a position to be a big part of the solution to the climate crisis.

\*Educators can help by teaching students about climate science and social justice.

\*Nurses and healthcare workers can help by addressing the public health issues this crisis brings.

\*Firefighters will be on the frontlines protecting us against increasing risks and helping us adapt.

\* And workers from the building and construction trades can build the clean, sustainable energy, water and transportation infrastructure to provide a better future for our children.

\*Key to this is uniting behind a **Green New Deal** with a **Climate Jobs Guarantee** that could, according to the Labor Network for Sustainability, robustly fight inequality with full employment, aggressively fight climate change, counter boom/bust economic cycles, and democratize the economy. Now is not the time to deny or despair. It's time to think big and make labor a part of a just and sustainable future.