



PRESS RELEASE

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Relmagine Appalachia Coalition details regional infrastructure and investment priorities

White papers detail Appalachian climate investment strategy for lawmakers post-election

In a virtual press conference today, [the Relmagine Appalachia Coalition](#) released a trio of white papers detailing a plan for infrastructure investments in broadband, modernizing the region's manufacturing sector, reviving the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and promoting regenerative agriculture.

[View the press conference here.](#) [Read the reports here,](#) and [a summary of the reports here.](#)

The white papers provide greater detail to several components of the [Relmagine Appalachia blueprint released in July](#), designed to modernize the electric grid, grow clean and efficient manufacturing in the region, revive the Civilian Conservation Corps and promote local farmers using regenerative agriculture practices. These papers also demonstrate that federal investments in the people, communities and infrastructure of Appalachia can revitalize the region, if Appalachians demand their elected officials step up to the challenge. The blueprint has now been endorsed by over 90 organizations.

Last week, the [Political Economy Research Institute](#) (PERI) released two studies showing that the [Relmagine Appalachia blueprint](#) could create nearly half a million high-quality jobs across [Pennsylvania](#) and [Ohio](#) alone.

Policy Matters Ohio Senior Researcher Amanda Woodrum authored a white paper on how to expand good manufacturing jobs in the region. She shows that by supporting industrial energy efficiency measures and retooling the region's existing infrastructure like old coal-fired power plants, federal policymakers can create good jobs for Appalachians of all races and genders — especially those who worked in fossil fuels. PERI's recent jobs study details how investments in modernizing manufacturing could create 34,430 jobs in Pennsylvania and Ohio alone.

“Downturns in the economy spur changes in approach, with companies investigating options to streamline,” Woodrum said. “Industrial energy efficiency measures can cut costs and often increase plant capacity for expanded production in the future. It is a good time for federal leaders to help manufacturers invest to become cleaner and more energy efficient, so they can come out of this recession ready to compete in the global marketplace.”

Mark Shanahan, Principal of New Morning Energy LLC and former energy advisor to Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland, detailed policies that can build out Appalachia's broadband infrastructure. Using fresh data, Shanahan's white paper shows that 104 Appalachian counties in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Kentucky and West Virginia do not have access to internet speeds fast enough for basic functionality including video conferencing, online learning, or telehealth. The PERI study shows federal resources for broadband expansion could employ an estimated 10,500 people in Pennsylvania and Ohio alone.

"Appalachian counties have always struggled with the lack of broadband infrastructure," he said. "The pandemic spotlights how damaging that is to business, education, health care and social interaction. Failure to implement a comprehensive federal policy on broadband is highlighted by the fact that the FCC cannot even provide accurate data about who has access and who doesn't. In this paper, we document just how poor service is in this region. We also suggest solutions that allow rural and low-income areas to build local and sustainable wealth."

The coalition's white paper on reviving the Civilian Conservation Corps and regenerative agriculture shows federal policymakers how to create high-quality jobs that will also repair damage to the land. The CCC could create 100,000 jobs, according to the PERI study. The ReImagine Appalachia white paper shows that it could also break barriers for people who have had difficulty securing good-paying jobs, such as people with a conviction in their past. Implementing reforestation and regenerative agriculture could absorb over 20% of current carbon emissions in our states, according to the white paper.

"The ReImagine Appalachia vision, and now our buildout of that vision, are a call to action for lawmakers," said Stephen Herzenberg, Executive Director of [Keystone Research Center](#). "Our jobs and our climate crisis are urgent. If we respond aggressively after the election, we can create the opportunities, the hope, the sense of common purpose for which the people of our region hunger. If lawmakers miss this moment, our problems will only get more severe."

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Policy Matters Ohio is a nonprofit, non-partisan state policy research institute with offices in Cleveland and Columbus.