



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on August 31, 2011

## Seattle: \$20 Million Grant Creates 14 “Green” Jobs

Seattle reaped the benefit of a \$20 million federal grant to weatherize homes in one of America’s “greenest” cities, and 16 months later, a whopping 14 jobs were created — making the cost per job a wondrous \$1,428,571. “The jobs are not there,” Todd Myers, author of the book *Eco Fads*, told Fox News. “So we’re training people for jobs that don’t exist.” (In his famous October 27, 1964 speech in behalf of presidential candidate Barry Goldwater, Ronald Reagan noted that Lyndon Johnson’s “War on Poverty” proposed job training camps “that we’re going to spend each year just on room and board for each young person we help 4,700 dollars a year. We can send them to Harvard for 2,700!”)



Last year, Seattle Mayor Mike McGinn skipped to Washington to blazon the new “green jobs” initiative that is supposed to create at least 2,000 jobs and shrink Seattle’s carbon footprint by insulating attics and crawl spaces in thousands of homes. But the project has fallen way short of its goals.

The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* [reported](#) on the federal government’s latest environmental hoax:

As of last week, only three homes had been retrofitted and just 14 new jobs have emerged from the program. Many of the jobs are administrative, and not the entry-level pathways once dreamed of for low-income workers. Some people wonder if the original goals are now achievable.

“The jobs haven’t surfaced yet,” said Michael Woo, director of Got Green, a Seattle community organizing group focused on the environment and social justice.

“It’s been a very slow and tedious process. It’s almost painful, the number of meetings people have gone to. Those are the people who got jobs. There’s been no real investment for the broader public.”

The social-equity aspect of the project has also come into question. Congressional leaders touted the program as an opportunity to assist homeowners in poor communities, but so far hospitals and the Washington Athletic Club are the only buildings that have received financing. “Who’s benefiting from this program right now — it doesn’t square with what the aspiration was,” said Howard Greenwich, a director at economic-justice group Puget Sound Sage. “I think what it boils down to is who’s got the money.”

Contractors who perform the energy audits and home upgrades blame the government for meddling in their business practices, as they are required to pay workers \$21 an hour with full benefits — while the average wage for new workers who lay insulation is \$12 per hour, according to contractors in the area. Part of the \$20 million grant went to local agencies, such as Got Green, that train workers in weatherization home upgrades. But the intent to create career-path jobs soon dissolved as months slid



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by with no work. “People are frustrated and rightly so,” said Josuah Curtis, the city’s manager for Community Power Works. “There’s been sort of a lag time when people graduated from those programs.”

Myers and other opponents of the project say the government is advocating a product that consumers have no interest in, or does not provide adequate savings to the homeowner. The average energy bill for U.S. homeowners is \$2,000 a year, and the weatherization upgrades intend to save 15 percent on consumption. But including government incentives, paid for by taxpayers, the upgrades cost \$10,000, which means it will take over 30 years before the homeowner sees any reduction in their energy bill — and the average U.S. household [moves](#) every 10 years.

Seattle is not alone in this taxpayer-funded boondoggle, as the Department of Energy has distributed \$508 million to 41 states for its Better Buildings Neighborhood Program, and so far the initiative has created or retained a meager 600 jobs. The program’s goal is to weatherize 150,000 homes by 2013 and save consumers \$65 million a year on energy bills; however, one year has passed and only 9,000 homes have been upgraded.

San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed had a ribbon-cutting ceremony earlier this month for a new solar power company, SolFocus, which manufactures free-standing solar panels. Interestingly enough, SolFocus assembles the panels in China, so the new San Jose headquarters [employs](#) a mere 90 people. Overall, California has been awarded \$186 million in federal stimulus money to weatherize homes, and the state has spent over half of its funds to create a paltry 538 jobs.

Another solar-power components manufacturer, Evergreen Solar, also snatched a heavy bag of stimulus dollars. In April 2009, the White House boasted that the stimulus went to produce almost 100 jobs at an Evergreen Solar plant in Devens, Massachusetts. A year later, the company packed up its operation and moved to China. This month, Evergreen Solar [filed](#) Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

So in expanding the “green” jobs extravaganza, coupled with President Obama’s massive stimulus program that kicked off his presidency, taxpayers are yet again the losers. And some might say that if President Obama and leaders at the Department of Energy were CEOs of a major corporation, they’d be fleeing the country to evade the lawyers hired by their enraged investors.



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