

News Release

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Virginia Can Have a Green Recovery

*Environmentalists call on state leaders to make the stimulus sustainable
citing future competitiveness, savings for taxpayers*

Richmond, VA – A statewide coalition of more than 100 nonprofit and community groups is calling on Governor Tim Kaine and leaders in the General Assembly to place priority on economic and environmental sustainability when deciding how to spend dollars provided by the federal economic stimulus bill. The Virginia Conservation Network (VCN) cites a wide range of qualifying projects that will create near-term jobs with long-term benefits by improving energy efficiency and reducing pollution.

“Governor Kaine and members of the General Assembly will decide how millions of stimulus dollars are spent,” said Nathan Lott, the network’s executive director. “By selecting projects that make our state’s economy more environmentally sustainable, they can help Virginia recover faster now *and* save consumers and taxpayers millions more over time.”

Virginia Conservation Network sent a letter to the governor and legislators last week outlining for priorities for a sustainable stimulus:

- **Fix it first:** Repair aging roads and bridges, including making them safe for bicyclists and pedestrians, and repair leaking sewers and outdated water treatment systems. Dollar-for-dollar, repairs create more jobs than new construction, which requires greater materials costs and often carries the hidden costs of sprawl.
- **Invest for the future:** Make public buildings, homes and small businesses more energy efficiency and train Virginians for these and other green jobs.
- **Prepare for climate changes:** Ensure that all projects account for rising sea levels, and help farmers put best management practices on the ground that absorb excess carbon dioxide.
- **Maintain adequate public reviews:** Projects can be fast-tracked without sacrificing environmental review and public input altogether.
- **Maximize co-benefits:** Prioritize projects that achieve multiple goals.

Among the key projects for a sustainable stimulus are improvements to public transit and passenger rail, which will create jobs and improve access to jobs, protect consumers from volatile fuel costs, and cut global warming pollution. Long-overdue repairs to leaking sewer pipes, which are labor-intensive and needed throughout the state, will protect rivers

and save local taxpayers the high cost of building and operating unnecessary sewage treatment facilities. Similarly, improvements to the energy efficiency of public buildings could save taxpayers thousands.

Below are some of the provisions in the federal stimulus bill, officially called the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009, that Virginia can utilize to create jobs and improve quality-of-life in communities statewide. Environmentalists hope Virginia officials will maximize the use of these funds in the state.

Federal Stimulus Provisions Related to Environment, Energy and Sustainability

- \$29 billion for roads and bridges*
- \$17.7 billion for public transit and high-speed rail *
- \$1.1 billion for green jobs training*
- \$6.3 billion for energy efficiency block grants and state grants*
- \$5 billion for home weatherization*
- \$8.5 billion for HUD and HOME programs to increase energy efficiency in public and low-income housing*
- \$6 billion in loan guarantees and \$1.6 billion in bonds for renewable energy projects
- \$10.9 billion to modernize the electric grid*
- \$6 billion for clean water revolving funds and safe drinking water projects (EPA estimates Virginia will receive \$20.8 million for drinking water infrastructure and \$81 million will for wastewater treatment and pollution control)†

*Source: The Apollo Alliance, <http://apolloalliance.org/rebuild-america/energy-efficiency-rebuild-america/data-points-energy-efficiency/clean-energy-provisions-of-stimulus-are-consistent-with-apollo-economic-recovery-act/>

† Source: *The Virginian Pilot*, <http://hamptonroads.com/2009/02/va-get-102m-stimulus-water-sewage-programs>

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