

## Stimulus Jobs Should Be Good Jobs

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With their eyes on economic recovery, public officials in San Diego and across the state are scrambling to receive and spend federal stimulus dollars. But the spending will not translate into a long-term recovery unless it is invested in rebuilding the foundation of the middle class.

This means good jobs that provide career ladders and health insurance.

Besides failing to build the middle class, using taxpayer dollars to create jobs without health insurance leaves taxpayers on the hook for taking care of the uninsured.

The problem is especially acute for the construction industry, which is first in line for much of the economic stimulus spending. More than 650,000 construction jobs are expected to be created nationwide, from weatherizing homes to paving highways. But CPI's latest research report found that construction has the highest rate of workers chronically uninsured among all major industries in California.

Based on a statewide survey at the peak of the housing boom in 2005, our study shows that more than a quarter of the workers in the construction industry were chronically uninsured, that is, they did not have any health insurance for a year or more. The construction industry accounts for 15 percent of the state's chronically uninsured workers -- more than twice its share of the work force.

Construction industry jobs are risky, temporary and often low-wage. Even though gross profit margins of builders reached 24 percent during 2005, the quality of employment at the job-site was questionable. Some examples:

- Only 35 percent of construction industry workers received health insurance through their own employers, compared to half of workers across all industries.
- A construction worker was 4.6 times more likely to die on the job than the average worker.
- Framers, roofers and drywall installers who work in residential construction not only had the highest incidence rates for injuries, they were also some of the lowest paid (less than \$600 per week if they got full-time work).
- The urgency to create stimulus jobs should not come at the expense of ensuring that are good jobs. Without our agencies demanding greater accountability from the construction industry, many of the new jobs created by the stimulus will fall short of their potential to boost the economy because they leave working families without access to healthcare.

As President Obama said in creating the Middle Class Task Force:

*We know we need to create jobs, but not just any jobs. We need to create jobs that sustain families and sustain dreams; jobs in new and growing industries; jobs that don't feel like a dead end, but a way forward and a way up; jobs that will foster a vibrant and growing middle class, because the strength of our economy can be measured directly by the strength of our middle class.*