

A WORKFORCE TO BUILD AMERICA BACK, **BETTER**

Investing in American Resilience to Make Progress
on Climate, Jobs, and Racial Equity



**RESILIENCE
FORCE**

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RESILIENCE CORPS

A WORKFORCE TO BUILD AMERICA BACK, BETTER

Investing in American Resilience
to Make Progress on Climate,
Jobs, and Racial Equity

A WORKFORCE TO BUILD AMERICA BACK, BETTER



“Americans deserve infrastructure they can trust: infrastructure that is resilient to floods, fires, and other climate threats, not fragile in the face of these increasing risks.

FROM THE THE BIDEN PLAN

to Build a Modern, Sustainable Infrastructure and an Equitable Clean Energy Future



“#1: [...] Establish a U.S. Public Health Jobs Corps to mobilize at least 100,000 Americans across the country with support from trusted local organizations in communities most at risk to perform culturally competent approaches to contact tracing and protecting at-risk populations.

FROM JOE & KAMALA'S PLAN TO BEAT COVID-19

ABOUT RESILIENCE FORCE

Resilience Force is the national organization of America's rising Resilience Workforce—the workers whose heart, talent, and labor rebuilds after disasters. The Resilience Workforce helps American homes and cities stand back up after disasters and prepares our infrastructure for the next storm, or flood, or fire. In 2021, Resilience Force is working to mitigate the threat of climate disasters and COVID-19. We work to ensure that resilience is racially just and equitable.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



THIS PAPER PROPOSES A RESILIENCE CORPS

A JOBS PROGRAM TO PUT UNEMPLOYED AMERICANS TO WORK AIDING RECOVERY FROM CLIMATE DISASTERS AND MAKING CITIES AND STATES MORE RESILIENT IN THE FACE OF WORSENING DISASTERS. IT IS IMMEDIATELY ACTIONABLE: A LARGE-SCALE LABOR DEMAND EXISTS NOW, THE MONEY IS AVAILABLE, AND THE PROGRAM CAN BE IMPLEMENTED WITHIN EXISTING GOVERNMENT INFRASTRUCTURE. IT IS ALSO AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PROGRESS ON TWO OF OUR NATION'S TOP ISSUES: THE ECONOMIC CRISIS CREATED BY COVID-19, AND THE DESTRUCTION CAUSED BY CLIMATE CHANGE.

In the months leading up to the U.S. presidential election, wildfires spread throughout the American West. As they scorched 5 million acres of land, the air pollution in California, Oregon, and Washington spiked to “hazardous” levels.¹ In the Atlantic Ocean, there were 30 named storms, more than recorded in any previous year. Twelve hit the U.S. coastline, including six hurricanes.² Parts of the Gulf Coast,

including Florida and Alabama, were hit repeatedly. Louisiana saw five storms make landfall, including two hurricanes that hit the same city - Lake Charles. In the Midwest, a weather complex known as a “derecho” sent severe thunderstorms to a 700-mile stretch from Nebraska to Indiana.³ In Michigan, record rains breached two dams.

As climate change accelerates, we need a just transition away from fossil fuels. We commend President Biden and Vice President Harris on their commitment to action, and their recently named climate team. The President’s plan to restart the economy by spending \$2 trillion on clean energy jobs will expand opportunity, strengthen infrastructure, and reduce emissions.

But it won’t, at least in the short term, stop the fires, floods, and storms. Even if we radically slashed emissions today, it could be decades before those changes began to slow down the rate at which the Earth is warming.⁴

01. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-09-19/california-fire-smoke-health-risks>

02. <https://www.noaa.gov/media-release/record-breaking-atlantic-hurricane-season-draws-to-end>

03. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/article/derecho-wind-storm-iowa/>

04. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-020-17001-1>

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In the meantime, the lives of millions of Americans on the frontlines of climate change will be upended by cascading disaster, each wave more intense and destructive.

That is why it is essential that we invest in American resilience now. Even as we work as a nation to reduce carbon emissions, we must make our homes, schools, hospitals, and cities more capable of withstanding the next fire, or flood, or storm. Disaster recovery has become America's largest annual infrastructure project, but property losses are only part of the damage. When local businesses collapse, working people lose their jobs and income. When neighborhoods are hit, homeowners lose their wealth. When evacuees can't come home, cities lose their tax bases. The impacts of these losses are worse for Black, brown, Native, rural, and working-class communities.

THE RESILIENCE DIVIDE. Our current way of doing disaster recovery strips assets from communities of color, and drives inequality. Studies show that over the course of recoveries, Black and brown disaster victims experience a decrease in wealth, while white victims experience an increase. FEMA's (and more broadly, the federal government's) rules of recovery currently create a "resilience divide": communities that were wealthy before the disaster get more investment after and are more likely to bounce back. Race, education, homeownership, gender, and zip code can—and often do—determine whether recoveries will help or harm you.

Resilience is a national security imperative, an economic need, and a racial equity proposition. It is possible to rewrite the rules of recovery to embed equity as a result. This can start with a focus on the workforce. American resilience requires a large-scale workforce in cities and states. President Biden

has the opportunity to put hundreds of thousands of Americans to work immediately by investing in this **Resilience Workforce**. The funding for this already exists in the public and private sector.

The Resilience Workforce already exists as well. After disasters, thousands of workers drive the critical phases of response, rapid-repair, and long-term recovery. Often, these workers are performing critical work even as they themselves are reeling from the impacts of the disaster. Right now, they're doing it for low wages, and without benefits and critical protections. But resilience work can provide a path to the American middle class (much as manufacturing provided it in another era).

This memo is a playbook for securing the resilience workforce, and expanding it, through the creation of a **Resilience Corps**. The Corps would perform climate adaptation and climate mitigation work year-round. After disasters strike, workers would get pulled from this Corps into specialized disaster response, rapid-repair, and long-term recovery work. The Corps would include low-wage workers, workers of color, women workers, and the recently and long-term unemployed.

As a proof point, we have already built a model that's working in an epicenter of climate change and COVID-19: New Orleans. In partnership with the City, the New Orleans Resilience Corps is taking Black and brown workers who have lost their jobs in the economic shutdown, retraining them for COVID-19 and climate-related work and hiring them—while preparing them for future careers in the expanding resilience industry.⁵ We describe this in detail on the next page.

05. <https://apnews.com/article/virus-outbreak-new-orleans-hurricane-laura-hurricanes-archive-f6bc89b0a2d2b667fbb7a39727e4eb82>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Closing the resilience divide and building out the Resilience Corps can start inside the Department of Homeland Security (FEMA).

Our proposal walks through how to do that. But the frequency and destructiveness of disasters have made resilience a large-scale need that requires coordination across multiple government agencies. In order to achieve this, the Biden Administration can create an inter-agency Resilience Task Force comprised of all the agencies that fund disaster recovery and resilience, coordinated by a Chief Resilience Officer. This proposal walks through the agencies involved in resilience and the rationale and timetable for shifting to a whole-government approach. Our proposal sets up three wins for the Biden Administration: jobs, pathways to the middle class, and the financing to jumpstart local economies.



REAL JOBS NOW IN HIGH-UNEMPLOYMENT AREAS.

The Biden Administration can create a Resilience Corps immediately, starting in FEMA, targeting frontline communities hit by disaster and deep unemployment. This memo lays out the starting point, staged expansion, and funding mechanisms for the Resilience Corps.



LONG-TERM PATHWAYS TO THE MIDDLE CLASS.

The Biden Administration can leverage the labor need in federally-funded resilience to expand job quality and job access. This memo lays out how the Biden Administration can ensure that jobs created by federal funds for the disaster recovery and resilience industry are quality union jobs. And we describe how the Administration can remove structural barriers to employment.



THE FINANCING TO JUMPSTART RECOVERIES AND LOCAL ECONOMIES.

This memo presents a finance solution that can leverage disaster recovery and resilience to jumpstart local economies. In the current system, the federal government funds disaster recovery. But municipalities have to cover their costs up front and get reimbursed much later. These up-front costs are enormous, and very few cities can afford to front the money. We describe how the Biden Administration can fix this by advancing money to municipalities, allowing them to hire local workers immediately.

The memo also recommends priorities for immediate action and the first 100 days of the Biden Administration.

THE EXTRAORDINARY LABOR DEMAND

Resilience Requires a Workforce



Disasters

make headlines

for days or weeks, but

rebuilding takes years

2020'S WILDFIRES DESTROYED OVER 10,000 BUILDINGS IN CALIFORNIA. THE RECORD RAINS DESTROYED 2,300 HOMES IN MICHIGAN. THE "DERECHO"—THE INLAND HURRICANE—THAT TORE THROUGH THE MIDWEST DESTROYED 40% OF IOWA'S CORN AND SOYBEAN CROP. THE RECORD 29 ATLANTIC STORMS CAUSED \$40B IN DAMAGE IN THE GULF STATES. REBUILDING AT THIS SCALE REQUIRES A MASSIVE WORKFORCE.

This Resilience Workforce already exists. After disasters, thousands of workers rebuild our cities and homes. They clear debris and trees, fix roofs, repair fire damage; remove floodwater, mold, and toxic sludge; rebuild homes, schools, hospitals, and entire cities. A majority are people of color, including Native, Black, Latinx, and Asian Americans. A large portion are immigrants. A significant share are women. We need to secure this workforce by helping these workers stay in the industry, and we need to add hundreds of thousands to their ranks. To carry

out the scale of rebuilding necessary, America needs a vastly expanded resilience workforce.

Without this workforce, cities can lose homes, and with them, their tax base. After a disaster, residents have one year to get their homes back up to code. If they don't, they face fines. Many choose to leave. Municipalities that have already paid millions of dollars up-front to repair roads and government buildings now lose residents. When the tax base migrates away, cities face bankruptcy and even collapse.

Construction isn't the only resilience industry—it's one of four. The other three are health, emergency services, and social services. Disasters impact physical, health, and social infrastructure. In each of these resilience sectors, there is tremendous labor need to fill, and the money authorized to pay for it.

To meet the needs of cities and states on the frontlines of climate change, we propose three priorities.

AN EXTRAORDINARY SCALE

Resilience Requires a Whole-Government Approach



The federal government

must adopt an

integrated approach to resilience

THE WORSENING SCALE OF DISASTER URGENTLY DEMANDS AN APPROACH THAT IS COORDINATED ACROSS ALL OF THE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES THAT FUND DISASTER RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE.

After disasters, three lead agencies are involved in rebuilding. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides immediate disaster-relief funds. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides housing supports and disaster recovery block grants. The Department of the Interior (DOI) leads the response to wildfires. But many other agencies are involved as well, including the Department of Defense (DOD) through the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Department of Transportation (DOT). And certain agencies have

programs that are expanding to incorporate resilience as a goal. For example, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) provides health insurance, childcare, and income supports to low-income people in disaster zones. Within the Department of Commerce, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) runs several important coastal and ecosystem restoration programs that are increasingly incorporating resilience goals.

The Biden Administration should create an interagency Resilience Task Force comprised of all the agencies that fund disaster recovery and resilience, coordinated by a Chief Resilience Officer.

The taskforce should coordinate around three major priorities.

PRIORITY ONE

Establish a Resilience Corps, Starting in FEMA

AT SCALE, THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION SHOULD CREATE A RESILIENCE CORPS OF 150,000 WORKERS. IN ITS PILOT PHASE, THE PROGRAM COULD START WITH 15,000 WORKERS, BROUGHT ON IN LOCAL PLACES THROUGH PILOTS. PILOTS WOULD TARGET PLACES WITH FREQUENT AND SEVERE DISASTERS, LOW RATES OF HOMEOWNERSHIP AND HOME INSURANCE, AND HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT.

This 15,000-strong Resilience Corps could be created immediately inside the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Resilience Department. This department reports directly to the Administrator, already includes the office of Grant Programs, and coordinates with FEMA's short-term response units. Using existing authority and resources, the Administration should add 15,000 positions via the Cadre of On-Call Response/Recovery (CORE), inside the Resilience Department.

HOW IT WOULD WORK:

Year round, the Resilience Corps program would hire and train unemployed and underemployed workers in frontline communities to work throughout the year on climate mitigation, adaptation, and disaster preparedness. This would include building of green and resilient infrastructure and developing disaster preparedness capacities. Projects would include retrofitting low-income homes and public facilities for resilience, fortifying roads, bridges, and other transportation systems, and habitat restoration.

Immediately after a major disaster, the Resilience Corps would temporarily deploy to an area affected by a climate disaster to conduct rapid repair. They'd clean debris, restore basic services, and get people back into their homes.

At the end of the rapid repair period, when the community is more stabilized, the Resilience Corps would train and onboard local workers who will continue the work of long-term recovery, increasing access to high-quality jobs and career pathways in the resilience industry.

This would create economic opportunity in frontline communities, strengthen federal disaster response, and make communities more resilient by investing in mitigation and adaptation projects.

The pilot program can target places with frequent and severe disasters, low rates of homeownership and home insurance, and high unemployment.

A critical immediate function of the Resilience Corps would be to power the re-opening of schools by making them—and other large-scale buildings—structurally ready to face the threat of COVID-19.



WHAT THE RESILIENCE CORPS DOES

Year Round

Prevention and Preparation

This includes mitigation, reducing emissions and pollution that contribute to disasters; adaptation, making infrastructure better suited for our new climate reality; and preparedness, ensuring that communities are ready and know what to do when disasters strike.

The Resilience Corps would be deployed year-round to low-income, recently affected communities to assist in the building of green and resilient infrastructure and in developing disaster preparedness strategies.

Post-Disaster

Rapid Response

Immediately following a disaster, this phase focuses on the rapid repair of physical and social infrastructure.

The Resilience Corps would be deployed to affected areas immediately after disasters to address critical needs and jumpstart rebuilding. This would shorten rebuilding time and ensure vulnerable Americans can get back to their homes and communities sooner.

Long-Term Recovery

After the area has been stabilized, this phase includes rebuilding major infrastructure and restoring normal social and economic functions.

During this time, the Resilience Corps would train and onboard workers for private contractors who will continue the rebuilding effort. Resilience Corps members would then transition back to their year-round assignments.

PRIORITY TWO

Ensuring High Labor Standards and Increased Access to Resilience Jobs

RESILIENCE WORKERS DO DANGEROUS, ESSENTIAL JOBS FOR VERY LOW PAY, WITHOUT BENEFITS. BUT OVER THE NEXT DECADE, AS DEMAND INCREASES, THE EXPANDING RESILIENCE INDUSTRY CAN BE A PATHWAY TO THE MIDDLE CLASS FOR MILLIONS OF AMERICANS—LIKE MANUFACTURING WAS IN ANOTHER ERA. THIS IS ONLY POSSIBLE IF WE SET MINIMUM LABOR STANDARDS IN THE INDUSTRY AND REMOVE BARRIERS TO ENTRY.

MINIMUM LABOR STANDARDS. Federal funds pay for much of disaster recovery and resilience. This is a starting point for raising wages and improving working conditions. The Administration should attach labor standards to all disaster recovery and resilience funding, regardless of agency or receiving entity.

Resilience work labor standards should include a \$15 minimum wage (indexed for inflation), portable benefits, paid sick leave, paid health insurance, the right to collectively bargain, and, for workers employed by contractors under this program, workers' compensation. These standards should be universal across federal resilience investments.⁶

A first phase would apply these standards to all funds from the four lead agencies involved in rebuilding: the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which provides the bulk of immediate disaster-relief funds; the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which provides housing supports and disaster recovery block grants to affected areas; and the Department of the Interior (DOI), which leads the response to wildfires.

Eventually, this concept could be braided throughout all agencies as the federal government adopts a more integrated approach to resilience. As programs that originated with other narrower goals (such as habitat restoration) expand to incorporate resilience goals, we can embed equitable economic development as a priority. Two such agencies are the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which provides

health insurance, childcare, and income supports to low-income individuals; and the Department of Commerce, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which runs several important coastal and ecosystem restoration programs that are increasingly incorporating resilience goals.

REMOVING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT. Race, criminal records, gender, and geography present enormous barriers to entering the resilience industry. To build the scale of workforce we need, and to bridge the resilience divide, we must remove these barriers proactively, through government action.

We can remove barriers for people with criminal records by ensuring that the federal policy of “ban the box” applies to all resilience workers, both those directly employed by the U.S. government and those employed by contractors under this program. The program should also include funds to offer legal assistance to resilience workers who want to apply for pardons and expunge arrest, misdemeanor, and (where possible) felony records.

We can remove barriers for immigrants by eliminating citizenship requirements for federal resilience work, providing immediate deportation relief and work authorization to undocumented resilience workers, and advocating for permanent protections and a pathway to citizenship for resilience workers with Congress.

ENFORCEMENT. The Wage and Hour Division of the Department of Labor should be tasked with enforcing these standards. The Administration will need to ensure that they have the staff and operating capacity to do so effectively. Legislative change should prohibit the suspension of the Davis Bacon Act and the Service Contract Act after disasters and extend these requirements to all recipients of federal funding, even private homeowners and states.

06. Currently, the Davis Bacon Act and the Service Contract Act require prevailing wages on federal projects. However, this does not apply to funds given to and deployed through private property owners, federal funds given in reimbursement to states, and it's sadly common to suspend Davis Bacon after disasters.

PRIORITY THREE

Financing Local Recovery and Resilience

IN ADDITION TO THE DISASTER RECOVERY WORK DIRECTLY COORDINATED AND STAFFED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT VIA THE RESILIENCE CORPS AND OTHER AGENCIES, THE ADMINISTRATION CAN ENSURE THAT LOCAL COMMUNITIES CAN RECOVER FROM CLIMATE DISASTERS, INVEST IN ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES, AND CREATE HIGH-QUALITY RESILIENCE JOBS.

A FEDERAL FUNDING MODEL THAT HELPS MUNICIPALITIES JUMPSTART RECOVERY. A simple public financing solution can reach the most vulnerable communities, jumpstart their disaster recovery efforts, and create good resilience jobs for local residents.

The federal government funds much of disaster recovery, but municipalities have to cover their costs. These up-front costs are enormous, and very few cities can afford them. Debris removal alone can bankrupt municipalities long before reimbursements kick in. This cash flow problem slows down the rebuilding process. It's one more reason that disaster recovery, as it is carried out now, compounds pre-disaster inequality: fiscally weaker communities can't pay up front and get reimbursed later. They struggle, while communities with stronger tax bases and higher income populations can afford to pay up front.

The Biden Administration can fix this by advancing funds to state and local governments. After a disaster, the federal government would grant immediate funds to local governments, rather than reimbursing costs later. This would allow communities to jumpstart their recoveries and hire local workers. This simple shift

would be a game-changer. It would create desperately needed employment after disasters. Floods, fires, and storms collapse small businesses and local economies, and create high unemployment. It would get people back in their homes faster. And it would bridge the resilience divide.

To be clear: this would be a change in the timing, not the amount or basis, for allocating federal funds. This reform has long been recommended by leading analysts of how our disaster recovery system compares with that of other advanced economies. The most efficient way to do this would be to use modified Stafford Act authority, especially for disaster declaration and pre-approving federal aid, to advance funds to eligible awardees.

To expand funding for resilience and adaptation work, i.e. beyond the Stafford-authorized funds referenced above, the federal government could expand and deconflict existing grant programs (which currently flow through several agencies), and/or create revolving loans modeled on the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Water State Revolving Fund. The EPA fund provides states with low-interest financing for water infrastructure investments—to date, over 41,000 loans totaling more than \$138 billion, with regular disbursements and loan repayments. This is a successful and fiscally sustainable model that the federal government could adapt to support resilience investments as well.

A PILOT THAT'S WORKING

The New Orleans Resilience Corps

A POWERFUL DEMONSTRATION OF THE RESILIENCE CORPS MODEL ALREADY EXISTS FOR THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION TO TAKE TO SCALE. IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, WE HAVE BUILT OUT A NEW ORLEANS RESILIENCE CORPS, FUNDED IN PART THROUGH FEDERAL DOLLARS FROM THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA).

Launched in fall 2020, the New Orleans Resilience Corps takes workers who lost their jobs during the COVID-19 shutdown, retrains them, and hires them to perform critical work to make the city more adaptive to climate change and COVID-19. In the initial pilot, a corps of Community Health Workers with deep ties in different neighborhoods across the city have been hired to respond to community needs in the face of disasters like hurricanes and the coronavirus pandemic. Their work has included increasing access to COVID testing, building trust in the vaccine, and helping residents understand how to access benefits they may be eligible for, including SNAP or FEMA's individual disaster assistance. The pilot is being expanded to include mitigation and adaptation projects in the construction and rebuilding industries.



RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Immediate Priorities

THE ADMINISTRATION SHOULD SEND A STRONG MESSAGE THAT IT IS READY TO TACKLE THE ISSUE OF CLIMATE RESILIENCE BY TAKING KEY EXECUTIVE ACTIONS:

- Establish an inter-agency resilience task force across all of the federal agencies that fund disaster recovery and resilience and appoint a Chief Resilience Officer to run it. The task force could start with DHS (FEMA), HUD, DOI, ACOE, and expand to include DOT, HHS, DOC, and others.
- Direct FEMA to review its administrative policies and take steps to close the resilience divide, the growing racial and economic inequality between low-income communities of color and high-income communities as a result of climate disasters. Currently, FEMA's internal policies instruct them to spend the most money where they can achieve the greatest financial savings in the event of a disaster. However, this creates a perverse incentive to invest in higher-income areas. A better principle would instruct FEMA to spend the most where it can best level the risk between high- and low-income communities.
- Ensure we rebuild after disasters in ways that increase our resilience and ability to withstand future risk. All repairing, rebuilding, and new construction after disasters should reflect resilience standards based on best available data and science. Resilience should not be cordoned off as a discrete set of investments separate from other rebuilding work after disasters. Instead, we must integrate principles of resilience into all rebuilding and recovery efforts to help the U.S. prepare for the increasing threat of climate disasters. One example of how this could be implemented is to reinstate the more stringent Federal Flood Risk Management Standard outlined in Executive Order (EO) 13690. Originally issued in January 2015 and rescinded in March 2018, this EO instructs the government to use best available data to determine base flood elevation and requires non-critical federal facilities to be constructed two feet above that level and critical facilities three feet above that level. Further steps could include halting federal flood insurance for luxury development occurring in the floodplain, or to create a national standard for disclosure of flood risk for all home sales.



RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Priorities for the First 100 Days

AFTER SENDING A CLEAR MESSAGE, THERE ARE SEVERAL ACTIONS THE ADMINISTRATION CAN TAKE IN THE FIRST 100 DAYS TO CONTINUE THE MOMENTUM TOWARD ACHIEVING THE VISION.

- Launch a Resilience Corps within FEMA, creating 15,000 new jobs, to conduct year-round mitigation and adaptation projects in communities most frequently and hardest hit by climate disasters who can be deployed across the country after climate disasters to support rapid repair and rebuilding. This could be launched under existing authority at FEMA and expanded with Congressional support.
- Support local government's response to climate disasters and invest in local mitigation and adaptation projects. Modify federal funding and reimbursement processes to support rapid recovery after climate disasters by advancing funds to local governments instead of requiring cash-strapped localities to have to pay for recovery and later apply for reimbursement. Expand funding for resilience and adaptation work and create local pilots through new or expanded grant programs or the creation of a revolving loan program modeled on the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Water State Revolving Fund.
- Attach labor standards to all resilience work across all agencies, which would apply to federal workers, as well as to state and local governments and private employers that receive federal resilience funding. The wage floor for all workers engaged in resilience work should be \$15 per hour, adjusted for inflation, or the minimum wage specified by state legislation or a local living wage ordinance where work is to be performed—whichever is higher. Resilience jobs should also provide at least 5 days of paid sick leave and at least 5 days of paid vacation annually, and employer paid health insurance equivalent to a silver plan under the Affordable Care Act. Workers should be guaranteed access to collective bargaining should they choose to participate. Workers employed by contractors should have workers' compensation coverage, regardless of the provisions of state law in the state where the work is performed.
- Remove barriers to employment for individuals with criminal records by expanding the policy of "ban the box" so that private employers who receive federal funding do not discriminate against those with prior criminal convictions.
- Empower the Department of Labor (DOL) to take a proactive approach to compliance and enforcement. The responsibility for enforcement likely falls to the Wage and Hour Division, which usually only investigates if workers file complaints. Given the scale and impact of labor violations during rebuilding processes, the DOL should be empowered to take a proactive approach to compliance, working with other DOL divisions such as OSHA and other executive agencies, after a disaster. This likely means scaling up staffing and providing additional resources.
- Remove barriers to employment for non-citizens by removing U.S. Citizenship requirements for FEMA CORE and any other agencies engaged in resilience work.
- Facilitate the rapid-repair and full recovery from 2020 disasters: grant immigration protections to resilience workers, and suspend all immigration enforcement during recovery and rebuilding. The administration should use its executive authority to provide deportation relief and work authorization to all individuals working to repair areas impacted by 2020's unprecedented fires, floods, and hurricanes, all on top of the COVID-19 pandemic. Immediate protections will ensure the rapid repair phase is completed and homes brought back up to code within a year of the disasters.