



Congressman PETE AGUILAR

JOBS PLAN for the INLAND EMPIRE

INTRODUCTION

THE INLAND EMPIRE WAS HIT PARTICULARLY HARD BY THE GREAT RECESSION.

We have made significant gains in reducing unemployment, going from a high of nearly 15% in 2010 to our current unemployment rate of 6.8% in San Bernardino County.

But these numbers don't tell the whole story. These statistics don't include the thousands of people who have given up looking for work, or those who aren't working enough hours to keep up with everyday living expenses.

Equally as important, these statistics don't capture the struggles of Inland Empire families fortunate enough to have a job. From keeping up with the rising cost of everyday living expenses like gas and groceries, to planning for big expenses like the cost of college, health care and retirement security, Inland Empire residents find it increasingly more difficult to achieve financial security and stability.

Once I was sworn in as the new Representative for the Inland Empire's 31st Congressional District, I launched a Jobs Tour that took me across San Bernardino County. This Jobs Tour gave me an opportunity to hear directly from residents and the people who support local jobs in our community. I heard from employers, small business owners, community leaders, labor groups, and people looking for work.

Based on those conversations, the following Jobs Plan is a blueprint of what is needed to strengthen the Inland Empire economy and put our residents back to work. My plan calls for the following:

- › **Give small businesses the tools they need to grow and expand**
- › **Create 21st century jobs in renewable energy and biotechnology**
- › **Connect people looking for work with employers and job training**
- › **Invest in our infrastructure to support business growth**

This Jobs Tour gave me an opportunity to hear directly from residents...

THE JOBS LANDSCAPE IN THE INLAND EMPIRE

The Inland Empire was hard-hit by the recession, and we have a lot of ground to make up. At the height of the recession, our region's unemployment rate stood at nearly 15% and tens of thousands of people lost their jobs. Though we have made gains, families across the Inland Empire are still struggling to make ends meet. It has not been an easy decade, but we have the ability and resources to recover and grow.

According to the California Employment Development Department, by 2022 the region is expected to grow in population and add over 200,000 new jobs, with the transportation and logistics, retail, health care, and professional services sectors

expected to see the most growth. The construction industry is also projected to grow after losing thousands of jobs during the recession. As the Inland Empire's population grows, so will our region's job prospects.

For the same reasons that many families choose to call the Inland Empire home, we can attract businesses to our region. Compared with neighboring counties, our cost of living is lower. The cost of land and retail and office space is lower. We have room to grow and we have people eager to work. We have the conditions to grow our economy and create good-paying jobs for our residents.

HELP SMALL BUSINESSES SUCCEED

› **Cut taxes for small businesses to make it more affordable to start and expand a business.**

Small businesses account for 60% of new jobs created since the recession. However, small businesses face high tax rates and other barriers. One of the most effective ways we can get our economy moving again is by supporting small businesses that want to expand.

› **Reduce burdensome regulations and red tape to make it easier to start a business.**

In the 31st Congressional District, there are over 30,000 veterans but only 48 veteran-owned small businesses registered with the Small Business Administration. There are only 91 women-owned businesses and 108 minority-owned businesses registered. These numbers show the barriers small businesses face when pursuing federal opportunities, like contracting and designations. We must make it easier to start a business, and I will work with local entrepreneurs to end the unnecessary regulations and red tape that stand in the way of getting a new business off the ground.

› **Establish a Small Business Advisory Council to ensure small businesses have a voice in dealing with regulations that affect how they are able to do business.**

Federal agencies like the Small Business Administration's Office of Advocacy are required to review the effects and impact of regulations on small businesses. However, it can be difficult for small businesses to participate in the federal rulemaking process. With between 2,500 and 4,500 regulations published each year, we need to ensure that small businesses have a greater role in the federal regulatory process. A small business advisory council will enable me to advocate for Inland Empire businesses at the federal level, while further exploring new and innovative ideas for creating jobs in the Inland Empire.

CREATE 21ST CENTURY JOBS

› **Expand manufacturing in technology and renewable energy to create good-paying jobs in the Inland Empire.**

San Bernardino is already home to a number of high-tech manufacturers, particularly businesses that make specialized parts and equipment for the defense and aerospace industries. As a member of the Armed Services Committee, I will advocate for expanding the defense manufacturing industry in our region.

In a region that is sunny almost year-round, and land prime for renewable energy development, we have an opportunity to attract renewable energy companies, especially in wind and solar. With the cost of solar panels on the decline and demand on the rise, we need to capitalize on our geography by attracting solar panel manufacturers to our region. With the growing logistics industry, we have the ability to not only manufacture, but to package and ship solar panels and other products manufactured in the Inland Empire across the nation and overseas.

› **Attract companies conducting research and development in biotech and engineering.**

With plans underway to open a new medical school in the region, we have an opportunity to ignite a research renaissance in the Inland Empire. Much like Stanford University anchored the Silicon Valley tech revolution, research and development centers like Loma Linda University, UC Riverside's School of Medicine and future developments will help our region retain young talent and attract private funding for research and development in growing fields, like biotechnology and nanotechnology.

INVEST IN OUR INFRASTRUCTURE

› **Invest in our streets, roads, bridges, rail and public transit to support business growth and attract new businesses to the region.**

As the region's population grows and our infrastructure ages, we need to maintain and expand our transportation options: our highways, roads, bridges, airports, and railways. Maintaining and upgrading our infrastructure not only creates construction jobs in the short-term, but supports the thousands of employers in our region that rely on the public's infrastructure to do business. Expanding public transit options for commuters will also help attract new employers and reduce congestion on our highways. These investments are key to attracting new business and investments to our region, especially in the fast-growing logistics industry.

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A long-term surface transportation reauthorization bill is also necessary to continue federal funding of highway projects and to give state and local government certainty when planning transportation and infrastructure projects.

› **Create a National Infrastructure Bank to fund local projects and create jobs with public and private investments.**

Transportation and warehousing jobs are projected to increase by over 20% by 2022 in the Inland Empire. In order to ensure our economy adds these jobs, we need to continue making smart investments in infrastructure. Goods coming into the Ports of LA and Long Beach need to have clear passage through to Inland Empire warehousing and logistical centers. From there, they can be sent throughout California and the rest of the country through our region's highways, railways, and airways. The Infrastructure Bank could support infrastructure projects through loans, loan guarantees, bond issuances, and assistance with interest payments.

SUPPORT OUR WORKERS & INVEST IN OUR PEOPLE

› **Expand job-training programs and incentives to help employers train their new hires.**

Our region has a population of people ready to work, but many employers at the Jobs Roundtables noted that our region suffers from a skills gap – many potential hires lack the skills necessary to be hired.

The federal Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA) supports local Workforce Investment Boards, including the County of San Bernardino Workforce Investment Board (WIB). Our local WIB has been held up as an example nationally for their successful outcomes training unemployed job seekers and assisting businesses through programs like the On-the-Job Training program, which helps employers pay for part of the cost of training their new hires. The program pays for 50% of the wages for new employees for the first three months of employment to help employers train their new hires in the skills they need to be successful.

› **Host Job Fairs to help connect job-seekers with job training resources, companies looking to hire, and other employment resources and opportunities.**

Many local job-training resources are underutilized by business owners while job-seekers struggle to get connected with hiring industries. Work for Warriors is a California National Guard and Reserve program that helps veterans connect with potential employers and explain their qualifications in a way that makes sense to those doing the hiring. Increasing the use of this program can also help employers connect with the new hires they need and understand the specialized skills that veterans can bring to the workplace.

› **Host Business Workshops to connect entrepreneurs and business owners with resources to expand.**

Through agencies like the Small Business Administration and the Department of Defense, businesses can pursue grant and federal contracting opportunities to expand and grow their businesses. Unfortunately, many entrepreneurs and business owners underutilize the resources available to them. By convening workshops, I can help connect local businesses to resources available to them.

› **Create targeted tax credits for businesses who hire new workers.**

I will advocate for federal tax relief for businesses looking to hire new workers or start up. I heard many times at the Jobs Roundtables that small businesses want additional help to expand, and tax relief can be the key to unlocking those new positions.

CONCLUSION

In order to truly improve our economy, we need to invest in the middle class.

While we have made progress since the financial crisis hit seven years ago, many families throughout the Inland Empire are still struggling to make ends meet. That's why I've been working with Democrats and Republicans to put San Bernardino County residents back to work. But more needs to be done to get the Inland Empire economy moving again.

If we address these issues step by step, we can begin to turn the economy around and get the Inland Empire back on the road to recovery. We need to work with our small businesses to help them access tools they need to grow and thrive, and we must invest in 21st century jobs in new and developing sectors. As these opportunities expand, we need to keep up with our workforce to see to it that we are connecting qualified employees with employers, and that critical training programs are available to those who may need them. Finally, we must prioritize our transportation and infrastructure network. The future of the Inland Empire's economic development is dependent on being interconnected with all of California and the entire nation, which means strong and dependable infrastructure is essential.

These action items alone won't solve the Inland Empire's financial challenges, but they will get us going down the right path. In order to truly improve our economy, we need to invest in the middle class. Our economy will not grow until middle-class family paychecks grow. To address the broader economic challenges our communities face, we must also:

› **Make college more affordable by expanding Pell Grants, lowering student loan interest rates and making community college free.**

By making college affordable, we can help more San Bernardino County residents climb the ladder into the middle class. Many stable, good-paying jobs in growing industries require some amount of college and the unemployment rate in the region for college graduates is far lower than it is for those with less education. Investing in Pell Grants, reducing student loan debt burdens, and making it easier to finish college will lead to more graduates and higher incomes for middle-class families.

› **Invest in early childhood education and ensure our schools have the resources they need to educate our kids.**

In order to make sure our kids can make it to college and succeed, we need to do more to invest in education at an earlier age. If we invest in our public schools, our graduates will be prepared to graduate and move on to either a career or college.

› **Increase the minimum wage to help people keep up with higher cost of living.**

When the middle class succeeds, our economy succeeds. We can improve our economy by investing in the middle class, and that starts by raising the minimum wage. With more money to spend, families will shop at local businesses and support local jobs.

› **Ensure equal pay for women by supporting the Paycheck Fairness Act.**

Growing paychecks through a minimum wage increase will put more money in the pockets of families struggling to keep up with the rising cost of everyday living and household expenses – money that will be spent at local businesses. Similarly, ensuring women get equal pay for equal work means that families will see more earnings that can go to groceries, transportation, rent and child care. Those extra earnings will be reinvested right back into our local economy.

› **Enact comprehensive immigration reform that includes a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.**

Providing a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants will improve the Inland Empire's economy. Once more members of our community are able to work legally and earn a living, they will be free to spend their paychecks at local businesses and pay taxes. Fixing our broken immigration system is an investment in our local economy and will create jobs. ●

When the middle class succeeds, our economy succeeds.



Connect with **CONGRESSMAN PETE AGUILAR**

Aguilar.house.gov
@RepPeteAguilar
<https://www.facebook.com/reppeteaguilar>

1223 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: (202) 225-3201
Fax: (202) 226-6962

8300 Utica Avenue
Suite 105
Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730
Phone: (909) 980-1492
Fax: (909) 980-1651