1. Promote good relationships between workers and employers
Labor peace and neutrality agreements, project labor agreements, and community workforce agreements can reduce labor strife, improve the quality of goods and services, and expand work opportunities in communities that are in need. These strategies need to be properly crafted to withstand common legal challenges.

2. Protect existing compensation standards with prevailing wage requirements
Prevailing wage laws ensure that private companies hired or subsidized by taxpayer dollars for government projects pay wages and benefits at levels that don’t undermine local standards or market wages and benefits. Prevailing wage standards have long been a feature of federal contracting and have also been used in some state and local governmental projects. But the use of prevailing wage standards at the state and local level is spotty, and expanding their use can have significant benefits for workers.

3. Use workers’ boards to promote high standards
A handful of states have enacted procedures for the establishment of wage boards or workers’ boards. These boards include representatives of workers, employers, and the public and are empowered to set wage, benefit, training, and safety standards that exceed minimum-wage levels and require compensation at levels sufficient to sustain families. In implementing a wage board or workers’ board model, it will be important to carefully define who may serve on the board and include provisions that promote worker participation.

4. Expand access to apprenticeships and other training provided by joint labor-management partnerships
In most communities, highly skilled jobs pay the highest compensation. State-regulated apprenticeship programs are a traditional means by which the unskilled can gain access to these jobs. Developing a governmental program of fostering apprenticeship opportunities can be a tool for building middle-class jobs as well as empowering communities of color and economically marginalized communities.
5. Ensure compliance with workplace laws
Nearly all state and local governments have laws that supplement federal employment standards. But nearly all governments devote insufficient resources to ensuring compliance with those laws. To address this deficiency and ensure compliance with general workplace standards as well as government contract-specific standards, some state and local governments have developed co-enforcement programs that enlist unions and pro-worker organizations in the compliance effort. Co-enforcement works best as a partnership to ensure vulnerable workers know their rights and feel comfortable coming forward to report violations.

The Climate Jobs National Resource Center and the Center for American Progress can help advise advocates interested in pursuing any of these policies.

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Endnotes

2 Ibid.
4 Madland and Rowell, “How State and Local Governments Can Strengthen Worker Power and Raise Wages.”