



April 14, 2021

Biden's Infrastructure Plan

According to the New York Times, President Biden has introduced a \$2 trillion plan which he is calling the American Jobs Plan to overhaul and upgrade the nation's infrastructure, calling it a transformational effort that could create the "most resilient, innovative economy in the world." White House officials said the proposal's combination of spending and tax credits would translate into 20,000 miles of rebuilt roads, repairs to the 10 most economically important bridges in the country, the elimination of lead pipes from the nation's water supplies and a long list of other projects including broadband, the electric grid and housing; efforts to jump-start advanced manufacturing; and money to train millions of workers, as well as money for initiatives to support labor unions and providers of in-home care for older and disabled Americans, while also increasing the pay of the workers who provide that care.

More specifically, "they said the plan would also accelerate the fight against climate change by hastening the shift to new, cleaner energy sources, and would help promote racial equality in the economy."

The last sentence of this statement caught my eye. In the past, talk of spending on infrastructure usually meant government payments for construction jobs and repairs to roads and bridges. Contracts would go to large construction companies providing thousands of jobs for union workers. And the vast majority of those good paying union jobs would go to whites.

According to the Chicago Communicator News Media, Chicago Black United Communities (CBUC) has served as an advocate for the empowerment of Black people for more than 40 years, and notes discrimination in the construction skilled trades apprenticeship programs during the years 1999 to 2018. During this period, there were at least five skilled trades apprentice programs that had 100 percent white participants from between 1999 to 2018 and zero Black participation. Additionally, 15 apprentice programs had a minimum of 80 percent white participants. Another thirteen programs had 70 percent to 79 percent white participants.

So, when I hear plans for a huge federal infrastructure bill, I am also looking for it to not only upgrade our roads and bridges, but also provide true racial equity by providing more jobs for Black and brown people.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, sweeping initial 'L' followed by a series of connected loops and a final horizontal stroke.

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District