

# ... WSLC's Johnson reports from the Paris Climate Talks

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trade-exposed industries, as well as their communities. Those jobs will end at some point in this century. But we have to make sure the workers in those communities are respected, so that there are income and benefit supports for those workers, so that they're brought along, and not left behind. There have to be full retraining benefits available for these workers. If they're close to retirement, they need a free passage to retirement, and their health and pension benefits need to be protected. And the new jobs being created need to be quality jobs where workers have a voice at the workplace and where there's an opportunity for these jobs to be union jobs that are high-paid, not part of the Uber economy. So that's what we're fighting for.

## So does the Paris Climate Agreement include a commitment to a just transition?

The language around just transition, decent work, quality jobs and human rights is all in the preamble — the intention part of the document, not the binding part. But I want to be truthful here: Even in the binding part of the document, right now there's no language that enforces the ambitions they put forth to cut carbon emissions. So when you add up all the pledges that countries made to reduce carbon emissions, it adds up to a rise in global temperatures of between 3 and 4 degrees Centigrade. The operating part of the document says we're aiming for below 2 degrees, with a desire to not let temperatures rise above 1.5 degrees, because at 1.5 degrees, many island nations no longer exist, and many shore-lying communities, Bangladesh, possibly even Miami, no longer exist. But there's nothing in the document that says if you don't meet your pledge, "X" will happen. So in that context, getting just transition and human rights language into the preamble is a big historic first step.

## For those who might have missed the details, what does the Paris Climate Agreement do?

Countries have made certain pledges that they will reduce carbon emissions by X percent over the next 20 to 30 years. But right

now there is no formal independent or objective review process that says, "Okay, United States: You pledged X, so we're five years into that, are you on track?" There is no mechanism to do that, and if you're failing to meet your goal, there's no enforcement mechanism to say you need to step it up or get penalized. So we have a ways to go yet.

## So it's not like the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which has muscular protections for things like corporate intellectual property rights?

No. If there were a tribunal where people could take corporations to task for not cutting their carbon emissions, that would be a very different world.

## After the Paris terrorist attacks, it was announced there would be restrictions on protests at the climate talks. Did that impact what happened?

Security was very tight at the talks. I'm not sure I've ever seen as many police or army around. There was pretty strict control. Nonetheless, within the blue zone, which is where the talks

were happening, we had several demonstrations and rallies that were tolerated and I think had some impact. I participated in the citizens summit in Montreuil, which had thousands of folks out in the streets. And then on Saturday the 12th there were easily 10,000 people in the streets on the Champs-Élysées. I thought the police did a great

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Seated from left to right: Jeff Anderson, Bob Petroff, Bob Tackett and Everice Moro. Standing from left to right: Mike Pucik, Terry Lansing, Rose Etta Venetucci, Janet Irwin, Will Lukens, Sandy Gillis, Dave Tully, Sam Gillispie and Ed Barnes.

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