

February 1, 2017

Outcomes of government job creation should be monitored

Job creation has become a high priority in American public policy — not without reason. Since employment remains the primary form of income-generation for most households, decent-paying jobs are vital to restoring the deteriorating middle class.

But it's foolhardy to support [government](#) programs that promote all jobs of similar wage-range, regardless of their societal benefits and liabilities. Employment in polluting industries that impose health risks and environmental harm must not be promoted, especially when there are far more responsible alternatives.

Policy choices also have hidden wealth-distributing implications. [Investment income](#) goes primarily to the wealthy, while most jobs “created” are held by those of moderate means. The fewer jobs in ratio to a given amount of capital investment, the less affluence goes to the middle-class. Furthermore, capital-intensive, job-sparse development concentrates still more wealth in the top income-bracket.

For example, per billion dollars invested, nuke plants create one-third as many jobs as clean power like wind and solar. Likewise, clean-power projects support far [more jobs](#) than coal, oil, and natural-gas facilities, per dollar invested.

Note that over \$6 billion in [federal funding](#) went into expanding nuclear-powered Plant Vogtle. Moreover, a state-approved Georgia Power bailout for billions in Vogtle cost-overruns is being imposed on residential customers. These facts raise questions about the fairness of this “business venture,” hardly making Vogtle a free-market exemplar, for either energy or jobs.

Wildly unfounded claims are commonly used to justify “economic development” based on deceptively promoted job-creation and/or “tax-base enhancement,” without any subsequent documentation of the actual consequences.

Taxpayers should be concerned about long-term burdens of flawed development policies that leave the public holding the bag. Examples include extremely harmful — and problematic — radioactive waste from nuke-plants and climate-change caused by emission of greenhouse gases, producing damages from sea-level rise, wildfires, and drought.

If government-sponsored job creation is to be effective and officials making decisions are to be [held accountable](#), transparent and reliable measures for evaluating outcomes must be applied — both before and after economic development projects are implemented.

David Kyler
Center for a Sustainable Coast