

# VentureBeat

## California adds green jobs, becomes cleantech epicenter

Camille Ricketts | January 27th, 2009

The past several years have seen rapid growth in the number of so-called “green collar” jobs in the state of California, according to a new report from Mountain View, Calif.-based Collaborative Economics. Between 2005 and 2007 alone, employment in the sector spiked 10 percent to about 105,000. To put that in context, the overall workforce grew about one percent statewide. This shift is significant for the state, and Silicon Valley in particular, where many formidable cleantech companies have taken root. The region has always been a hub for computing technology but only recently emerged as a leader in the green economy — even though wind and solar projects have been toiling out of the spotlight elsewhere for decades.

The wave was kicked off in 2004, when then-California Treasurer Phil Angelides pushed the state’s large public pensions (CalPERS and CalSTRS) to commit \$1.5 billion to a “Green Wave” program. The initiative included investments into venture capital firms that backed clean technology companies. The green trend reached a crescendo in 2007, when green czar Al Gore decided to join the prestigious Valley venture firm Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers to help advise it on clean technology investments. The whole time, cleantech startups have rushed to set up shop nearby; other firms, like Mayfield Fund, Silicon Valley Bank and Draper Fischer Jurvetson, have dedicating more resources to cleantech initiatives of their own. Clearly the bulk of these new green jobs won’t be at slick venture-backed startups. According to the report, nearly 20 percent of them are in manufacturing — the actual plants where solar cells, turbine blades and electric engines are built. Other salient findings include:

- More than \$3 billion in venture money was invested in California cleantech companies in 2008 — representing over 57 percent of all U.S. investment in the sector.
- California has produced the highest number of patents (607) in the solar, wind and battery industries.
- Energy productivity (the total GDP produced per unit of energy) is 68 percent higher in California than the rest of the country. California generates \$2.17 in GDP for every 10,000 BTU of energy it uses. Contrast that with the \$1.29 for every 10,000 BTU for the whole U.S.
- More than 100,000 vehicles registered in California are hybrids or run entirely on electricity or natural gas. To hit the point home, more than 20 percent of all hybrids in the country were registered in the San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles and Sacramento.

Californians can probably look for these trends to continue after promising remarks made by president Obama yesterday endorsing the state’s stringent vehicle emissions standards. The clear support of the new administration could go a long way toward fostering further growth in electric car development and other innovations to limit emissions and energy use.