

Local residents to train for 'green jobs' through federal grant



AP/Alex Brandon

Labor Secretary Hilda Solis offers details about the "Pathways Out of Poverty" grants.

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WASHINGTON

Poor residents in seven island towns will be trained for "green" jobs in the energy industry as part of an \$8 million federal grant to a New York state nonprofit corporation.

Under the grant, The PathStone Corp. of Rochester, N.Y. will train participants in Puerto Rico, Rochester, N.Y. and Scranton, Pa., including unemployed individuals, high school drop-outs and individuals with a criminal record, for energy efficiency and clean energy jobs..

The program in Puerto Rico is designed for residents of Juana Díaz, Santa Isabel, Villalba, Arroyo, Coamo, Guayama and Salinas, and will focus on recycling plastics and hazardous materials. The Puerto Rico Department of Corrections was listed as a key partner in the program.

It could not be learned at press time how much of the grant will actually go to the island towns and how many of the projected 1,176 trainees would be in Puerto Rico.

The PathStone grant was one of 38 totaling \$150 mil-

lion announced Wednesday by Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis. The green jobs training grants were authorized by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

Solis said that the "Pathways Out of Poverty" grants — as the group of funding awards is known — will support programs that help disadvantaged populations find ways out of poverty and into economic self-sufficiency through the green jobs.

"These Pathways Out of Poverty grants will help workers in disadvantaged communities gain access to the good, safe and prosperous jobs of the 21st century green economy," she said, adding: "Green jobs present tremendous opportunities for people who have the core skills and competencies needed in such well-paying and rapidly growing industries as energy efficiency and renewable energy," she said.

Targeted populations will receive recruitment and referral services; basic skills, work-readiness and occupational skills training; supportive services to help overcome barriers to employment; and other services at times and locations that are easily accessible. Through these programs, participants will receive certifications and on-the-job training that will lead to employment, according to federal officials.