



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on January 18, 2012

Another Taxpayer-funded Solar Company Lays Off 40 Employees

"We have some technical people in here improving the efficiency of the assembly line," asserted Cicak, adding that the facility in Perrysburg, Ohio, still has a couple of dozen employees. He stated that Willard & Kelsey employs a little more than 80 employees when its production is fully functional.



The Ohio-based solar company has endured a string of production and staffing delays since its inception in 2008, but Cicak announced last week that the facility would reopen Monday after it completed its inventory adjustments. Interestingly, however, according to the *Toledo Blade*, only 15 vehicles were in the parking lot at 1:30 p.m. Monday, and the office "was devoid of activity, and the rows of desks were empty," implying that more is going on behind the scenes.

With the intent to create jobs, as most taxpayer-funded subsidies are justified, Willard & Kelsey reaped a slew of government benefits, including a \$3.3-million "job creation" tax credit, a \$5-million research and development loan from the Ohio Department of Development, a \$10-million loan from the Ohio Air Quality Development Authority, and a \$701,000 grant to offer training courses for 50 current and 250 new employees. Moreover, political support was provided by Vice President Joe Biden when he visited the facility back in June 2009, and the company has received valiant praise from both U.S. Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis and former Ohio Governor Ted Strickland.

On a side note, Cicak is a Democratic campaign donor who [contributed](#) thousands of dollars to Obama ally and Democratic Senate candidate Lt. Gov. Lee Fischer in 2010, who just so happened to be in charge of dispersing stimulus dollars such as the funding which went to Willard & Kelsey.

Last February, company officials made bold claims about how many employees the 262,000-square-foot facility would employ, announcing that it planned to have 250 employees by the end of 2011. Cicak added that the company could generate 600 to 700 jobs in the next two years and up to 4,000 in five or six years.

The Ohio Department of Development and head of the Northwest Ohio Solar Hub are reviewing Willard & Kelsey, but indicated that they are not giving up on the solar-panel maker.

While reported job projections have not been reached — and haven't even come close — the Ohio Department of Development assured that, at the moment, the company is not considered to be in default of its \$5-million loan. "We're monitoring it along the way," said Daryl Hennessy, the



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department's executive director. "The company's making monthly payments in terms of its loan. We're communicating with the company from the outset."

Sophia Fisher, executive manager at the Northwest Ohio Solar Hub, confirmed the layoffs, but asserted that she is confident the company will bounce back. "I'd say [Willard & Kelsey's situation is] pretty typical of the cycle these businesses go through and experience. It's not uncommon," she [averred](#). "Go in, make changes to production line improvements from efficiency and cost from a business perspective. Then you'll eventually, in the near future, you'll see them ramp up again for production."

While the finances of the start-up company are uncertain (as a privately held company, it does not release quarterly earnings and profits), Fisher said patience is imperative as this emerging technology industry endures growing pains. "Of course there's projections. Sometimes you meet projections; sometimes you have to modify it. Doesn't mean the industry as a whole is bound to fail or those jobs won't be created or exceeded," she insisted.

Of course, one might suggest that when considering Solyndra's \$535-million boondoggle, combined with the [dozen other green energy companies](#) currently in financial disarray — which collectively harvested billions of dollars in government assistance — these "industry setbacks" are more than just growing pains.



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