

Time to Improve the State of “OUR” Union

At this point we’ve all heard the statistics. One in ten Americans without a job. More than 30 million Americans without health care. Month after month of foreclosures.

Clearly, there is work to do.

During his State of the Union address last night, President Barack Obama pointedly reminded Democrats, “We still have the largest majority in decades, and the people expect us to solve some problems, not run for the hills.” And Republicans were also reminded that they still have the duty to govern in the interest of the people.

President Obama also reminded both parties and the American people that our country is great because, “generations of Americans were unafraid to do what was hard; to do what was needed even when success was uncertain; to do what it took to keep the dream of this nation alive for their children and grandchildren.”

We all have a vested interest in this nation’s economic recovery. Now is indeed not the time to “run for the hills.” And every single one of us will have to work to ensure that we get there. It’s important to remember, however, that we are on the right track.

In times of economic strife, it can be easy to forget the tremendous economic crisis President Obama inherited. George W. Bush inherited a \$236 billion budget surplus. Barack Obama inherited a deficit of more than \$1 trillion.

As Barack Obama took office, the economy was losing hundreds of thousands of jobs a month. More than 2.5 million jobs were lost in 2008 alone. Job loss had already turned into a runaway train. And it was gaining steam.

Make no mistake, we have seen more progress in the first year of the Obama administration than we did in eight long, grueling years under George W. Bush. We have seen working family tax cuts, an extension in unemployment benefits and massive infrastructure investment. The White House projects the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act alone has saved or recovered roughly 2 million jobs.

Yet, there is much more to do.

Nothing great has ever been done by standing by idly. Now, more than ever, we need action. So, where do we go from here? The status quo of partisan politics that has plagued this nation will certainly result in economic crisis for millions more Americans. President Obama made it abundantly clear last night that jobs and the economy are his absolute top priority. Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle have done the same.

The jobs bill that has passed the house would create jobs through nearly \$50 billion in infrastructure investment, as well as more than \$26 billion to stabilize public service jobs such as police officers, firefighters and teachers.

But, it is up to us to ensure that gridlock in Washington doesn't prevent millions of eager Americans from going back to work. In the midst of midterm elections, both Democrats and Republicans will be very careful not to act against the interests of voters who will head to the polls in November.

Every single person in this nation needs to take a vested stake in our economy. I urge you to contact your Congressional representatives and demand legislation that creates jobs and puts our economy back on track. Despite daunting economic circumstances, we have reasons to be hopeful. But to improve the state of our union, we must work together.

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