

# A New Spirit



**C**hange was in the air on January 20, 2009. Shortly after the stroke of noon – while under the watchful gaze of millions on the National Mall and billions more in front of television and computer screens here and across the globe – the United States of America officially inaugurated its 44th chief executive: President Barack Obama.

Many in attendance – buried in several layers of clothing while braving the bone-chilling cold and engulfed in a sea of people – said it was like nothing they’ve ever experienced before.

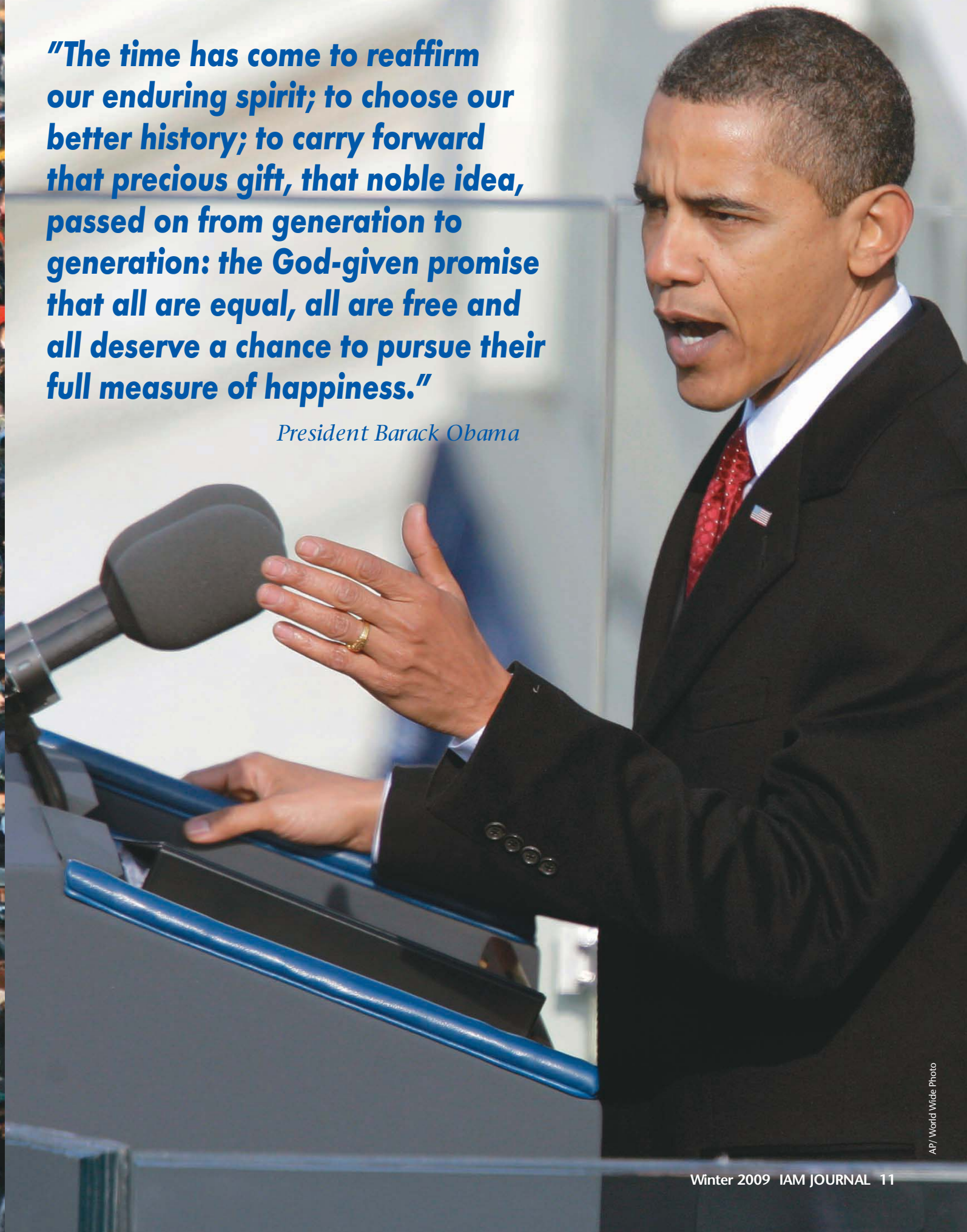
“It was fabulous,” said Joe Flanders, Directing Business Representative of IAM District Lodge 4, who traveled from Brunswick, Maine to Washington, DC, with his family and several other IAM members to witness the historic event. “For me and all the people around us, it felt like anything is possible. It’s never been that way. Never have I seen a president come into office with the amount of excitement he’s generated.”

“My fellow citizens,” said Obama in his first address as U.S. President. “I stand here today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you have bestowed,



**"The time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit; to choose our better history; to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea, passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness."**

*President Barack Obama*







mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors... Let us mark this day with remembrance, of who we are and how far we have traveled."

Our new president is, undoubtedly, a man of many firsts. The most obvious, of course, is the color of his skin. But for many, Barack Obama represents more than just the first

African-American president. He symbolizes a new beginning. A break from our nation's past. An end to the last eight years. A chance for new ideas and new opportunities. A new vision. A new hope. A new spirit.

### **First Priority: Recovery**

"The time has come to set aside childish things,"

said the President. "The time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit; to choose our better history; to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea, passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness."

Just two weeks into the

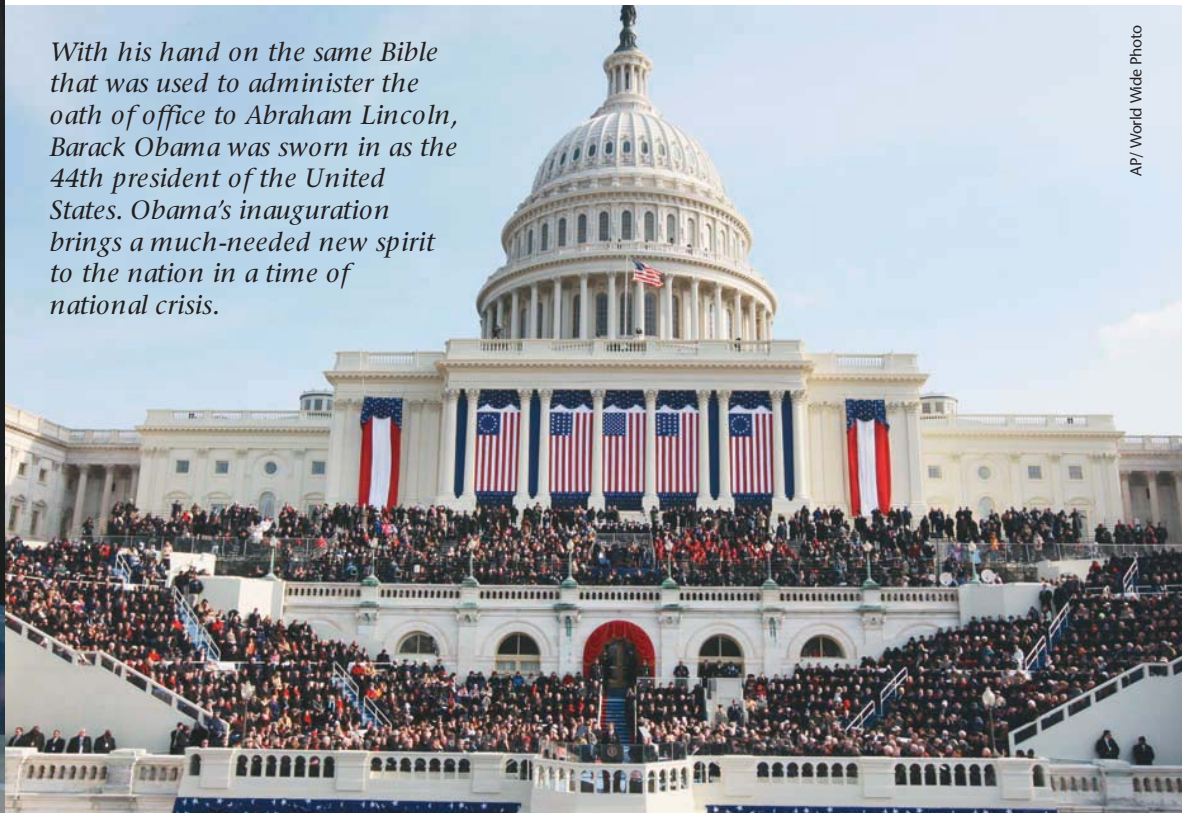


***"In reaffirming the greatness of our nation, we understand that greatness is never a given. It must be earned."***

*— President Barack Obama*

*With his hand on the same Bible that was used to administer the oath of office to Abraham Lincoln, Barack Obama was sworn in as the 44th president of the United States. Obama's inauguration brings a much-needed new spirit to the nation in a time of national crisis.*

AP/World Wide Photo



job, and the president's desk is already filled with pressing issues – many of which impact working families. The good news is Obama has a commendable record on that score.

"In reaffirming the greatness of our nation, we understand that greatness is never a given. It must be earned," said the President in his inaugural address.

"Our journey has never been one of shortcuts or settling for less. It has not been the path for the faint-hearted – for those who prefer leisure over work, or seek only the pleasures of riches and fame. Rather, it has been the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things – some celebrated but more often men and women obscure in their labor, who

have carried us up the long, rugged path towards prosperity and freedom."

### **Strong Record**

Since being elected as a U.S. Senator in 2004, he's voted in favor of working families 98 percent of the time. He's voted to raise the minimum wage, provide overtime pay, equal pay and family medical

***“The question we ask today is not whether our government is too big or too small, but whether it works.”*** — President Barack Obama

AP/World Wide Photo



*The mortgage crisis was just the tip of the iceberg of an economic storm that is sweeping across North America and the rest of the world's economies.*

leave, to protect Medicare and children's health insurance, and stop the privatization of federal jobs.

In 2007, he introduced the Patriot Employer Act, which provides a tax credit for companies maintaining full-time workers, providing health insurance, preparing workers for retirement, and maintaining their corporate headquarters in the U.S.

He also voted against the Central American Free Trade Agreement and strongly opposed the Columbia Free Trade Pact.

Obama pledged throughout his presidential campaign to protect our interests. And during his inaugural address, he acknowledged his intentions on making



AP/World Wide Photo

good on that promise:

“The question we ask today is not whether our government is too big or too small, but whether it works,” he said. “Whether it helps families find jobs at a decent wage, care they can afford, a retirement that is dignified. Where the answer is yes, we intend to move forward. Where the answer is no, programs will end.”

### **Shore Up Economy**

His first priority is to shore up America's failing economy.

Companies everywhere are scrambling to save money – at the expense of workers. The U.S. Labor Department reports that more than 11 million people are currently without work. Data shows 2.6 million jobs were lost in 2008 alone, at a speed faster than anything economists have seen since 1975. Sadly, the U.S. manufacturing sector continues to get hit with a record number of mass layoffs. Factory job losses totaled nearly 800,000 last year. Economists expect those numbers to mount.

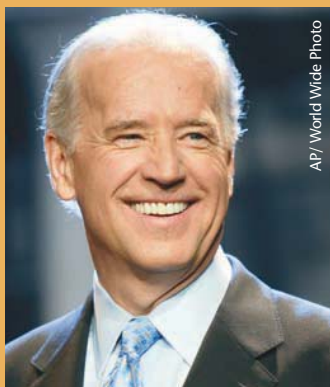
With a record number of job losses and an unemploy-

*Unemployment has jumped to levels not seen in more than two decades and could reach Depression-era numbers.*



# The Economic Recovery Team

The key to dealing with the issues and helping America get ahead not only lies with the successful passage of laws such as the president's economic recovery plan or the Employee Free Choice Act; what's equally important is *how*, if passed, these and other measures will be carried out. Or, more importantly, *who* will be carrying them out.



AP/World Wide Photo

**Joe Biden**  
*Vice President*

Sen. Joe Biden has been tapped to head the administration's taskforce for rebuilding America's middle class. He will also serve as one of Obama's top advisors when dealing with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the current crisis in the Middle East.



AP/World Wide Photo

**Hillary Clinton**  
*Secretary of State*

As Secretary of State, Sen. Hillary Clinton will help the president rebuild the United States' reputation abroad. She will work to address the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the crisis in the Middle East, the instability in Pakistan, and Iran's nuclear ambitions. She brings to the job a unique background having served as First Lady and New York Senator. She's also an honorary member of the IAM.



AP/World Wide Photo

**Hilda Solis**  
*Department of Labor*

As the daughter of immigrant parents with union jobs, Rep. Hilda Solis pledged, "I'll work to strengthen our unions and support every American in our diverse workforce." She supports the Employee Free Choice Act, expanding job training programs, increasing the minimum wage, improving equal pay laws and making sure pension plans are secure.



AP/World Wide Photo

**Ray LaHood**  
*Department of Transportation*

Rep. Ray LaHood is expected to play a larger role than past transportation secretaries thanks to the president's plan to create more jobs through public works projects. In addition to overseeing road and bridge repairs, LaHood will also have the task of improving the country's air infrastructure.



AP/World Wide Photo

**Tom Vilsack**  
*Department of Agriculture*

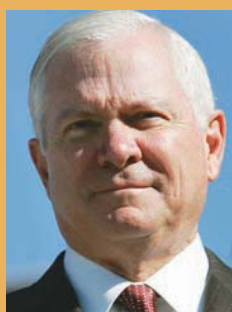
President Obama describes former Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack as "forward looking... in fostering an agriculture economy of the future." Vilsack will be responsible for finding more innovative ways to address the energy crisis as it relates to agriculture. He will also implement the 2008 Farm Bill, governing federal farm and food policy.



AP/World Wide Photo

**Tom Daschle**  
*Department of Health and Human Services*

Former Sen. Tom Daschle will head Obama's initiative to reform the country's \$2.3 trillion health care system and help the estimated 46 million Americans who currently live without health insurance.



AP/World Wide Photo

**Robert Gates**  
*Department of Defense*

Robert Gates is a holdover from the Bush administration. His main focus will be aiding Obama in his plans for Iraq and Afghanistan.

## Other Cabinet Members

**Timothy Geithner**  
*Department of the Treasury*

**Arne Duncan**  
*Department of Education*

**Steven Chu**  
*Department of Energy*

**Gov. Janet Napolitano, D-AZ**  
*Department of Homeland Security*

**Eric Holder**  
*Department of Justice*

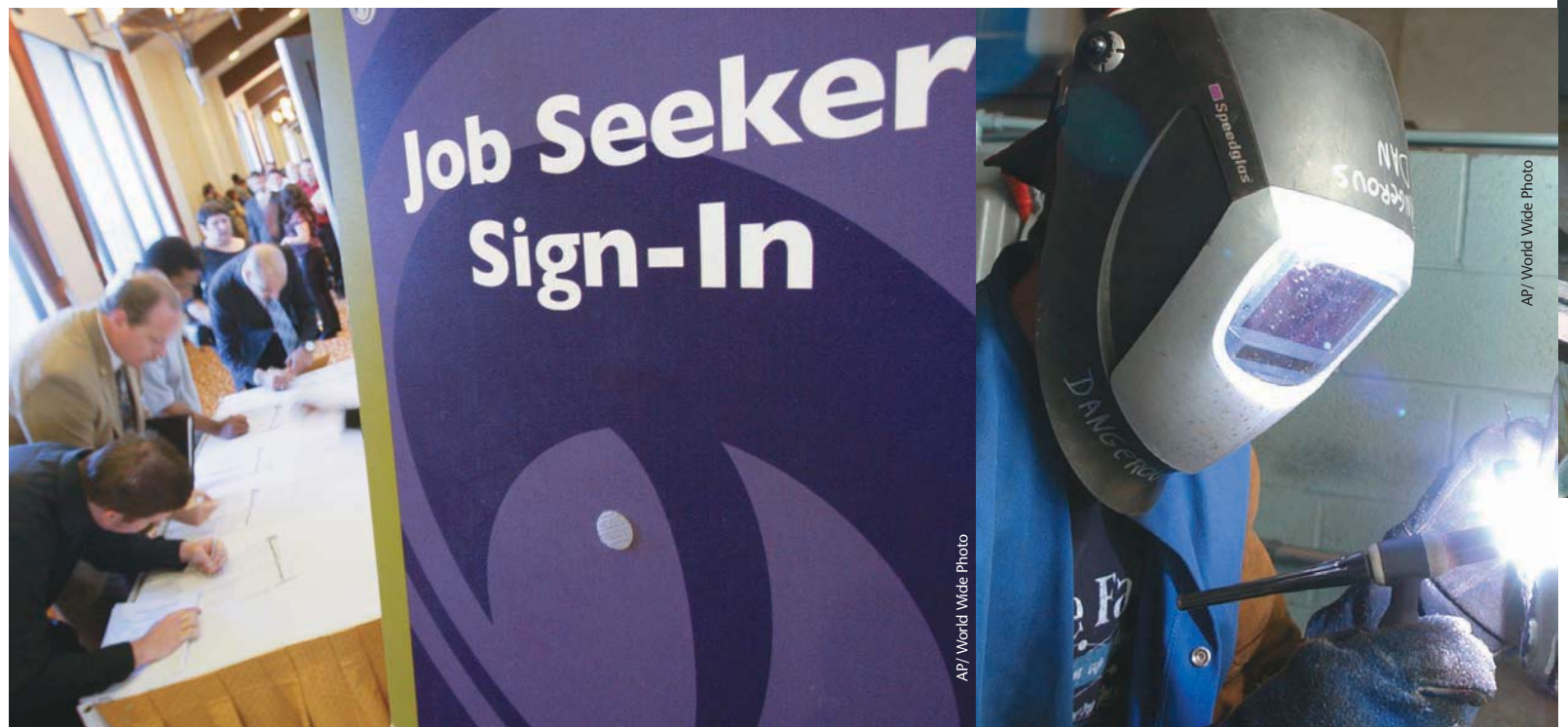
**Retired Gen. Eric K. Shinseki**  
*Department of Veterans Affairs*

**Shaun Donovan**  
*Department of Housing & Urban Development*

**Sen. Ken Salazar, D-CO**  
*Department of Interior*

***“It’s time to put our people back to work and open the door of opportunity for our kids.”***

*— President Barack Obama*



ment rate threatening to reach double digits, Obama proposes an \$825 billion stimulus package. The plan is expected to include \$275 billion in tax cuts and another \$550 billion in government spending.

### **Remake America**

“The state of the economy calls for action, bold and swift, and we will act,” Obama said. “We remain the most prosperous, powerful nation on Earth. Our workers are no less productive than when this crisis began. Our minds are no less inventive,

our goods and services no less needed than they were last week or last month or last year. Our capacity remains undiminished. But our time of standing pat, of protecting narrow interests and putting off unpleasant decisions – that time has surely passed. Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America.”

Despite Democratic cries that the amount is not enough to jumpstart the economy and Republican complaints that the country

is already staring at a possible \$1.2 trillion deficit for the current fiscal year, Obama is urging Congress pass the legislation as soon as possible.

“For every day we wait or point fingers or drag our feet, more Americans will lose their jobs. More families will lose their savings. More dreams will be deferred and denied,” said Obama earlier this year. “And our nation will sink deeper into a crisis that, at some point, we may not be able to reverse.”

Also included in Obama’s American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan are mea-





AP / World Wide Photo

*Creating high-tech jobs and giving young people the opportunities to learn the skills for those jobs must be a high priority for the new president and Congress.*

sures to rebuild the U.S. infrastructure while also investing in alternative energy. Translation: more jobs. At least three million, according to the president.

## **Rebuild Manufacturing**

"We will build the roads and bridges, the electric grids and digital lines that feed our commerce and bind us together," he said. "We will restore science to its rightful place, and wield technology's wonders to raise health care's quality and lower its cost."



AP / World Wide Photo

"He's talking about re-tooling America's manufacturing base," says IAM President Tom Buffenbarger. "Roads, bridges, the water system, the power grid and the supply of energy are going to create blue-collar jobs. The president is exactly right."

Obama's plan also talks about modernizing schools and providing America's youth with the 21st century skills necessary to meet industry needs and compete globally.

"We could lose a generation of potential and promise, as more young



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*After giving Democrats increased majorities in the House and Senate, voters expect leaders such as Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, left, to fulfill their pledge to help America's working families with middle-class jobs, access to health care, and investments in education and infrastructure projects.*

Americans are forced to forgo dreams of college or a chance to train for the jobs of the future,” he said, also earlier this year. “And, our nation could lose the competitive edge that has served as a foundation for our strength and standing in the world.”

Passage of the stimulus package is expected to come in early February.

### **Free Choice Act**

Another key issue awaiting the new president's attention is one that hits home to the Machinists – exercising a worker's right to

join a union. The Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) would make it easier for workers to form unions by requiring businesses recognize a union if a majority of their employees sign cards indicating they want one.

For too long, workers have had to deal with employers who routinely fire, threaten and coerce employees in efforts to keep workers unorganized. According to American Rights at Work, 25 percent of employers fire at least one pro-union worker when faced with organizing drives, 51 percent threaten to

close a worksite and 91 percent force employees to meet privately with their supervisors.

All despite research that shows allowing more workers to freely join unions and bargain with their employers will help rebuild the middle class, expand health care and improve retirement security.

### **Help Middle Class**

The IAM has been working hard to get the Employee Free Choice Act passed. The measure cleared the House in early 2007, only to face a filibuster by a small group of union-busting Republicans in the Senate.

Obama voted in favor of bringing the bill up in the Senate that year. Although he told a group of trade unionists, “We need a president who doesn't choke say-



Michelle Obama

## The New First Lady

Though considered a “super woman” of sorts by many, the lawyer, medical center executive and public servant Michelle Obama asserts her main job will be “Mom-in-Chief.”

“My first priority will always be to ensure that our daughters stay grounded and healthy, with normal childhoods – including homework, chores, dance and soccer,” she told reporters during her husband’s campaign.

Even though she hasn’t officially declared her First Lady agenda, many suspect she’ll continue with the

issues she supported even before her husband became president.

“Michelle looks forward to continuing her work on the issues close to her heart - supporting military families, helping working women balance work and family, and encouraging others to help those around them through volunteer projects,” said the transition team’s website.

“Policies that support families aren’t political issues,” says the First Lady. “They’re personal. They’re the causes I carry with me every single day.”



AP/World Wide Photo

Michelle Obama

President Obama refers to her as his “rock” – the person who keeps him focused and grounded. In her words, she’s just making sure he’s “keeping it real.”

The two met while working at a law firm in Chicago. They’ve been married since 1992.



Bill Burke, Page One Photography

ing the word union,” how hard he decides to push the Employee Free Choice Act in 2009 could prove to be the

biggest test of his commitment to labor.

“The time for workers to exercise their democratic

*Passing the Employee Free Choice Act will help restore America’s middle class by giving more working families the chance to bargain for better wages, health care coverage and pension benefits.*

right to free choice, better wages, better working conditions and quality health care is now,” says Buffenbarger. “We can no longer sit back and let others decide what our standards of living should be. Working with a new president and new Congress, we have the chance to set the nation’s direction.”

Also at the top of President Obama’s to-do list



*Inspired by a new spirit in America, millions of people gathered on the National Mall to witness the historic swearing in ceremony of America's first African-American president. The hopes and dreams of families around the world are resting on Obama's ability to steady the nation, create jobs and restore economic security.*

is a long series of foreign policy issues: scaling back the U.S. Military operation in Iraq, beefing up our presence in Afghanistan, dismantling Iran's nuclear program, and finding middle ground in the crisis between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants.

### **Our Moment**

Now, with an agenda in hand and a team beside him, President Obama has embarked on his four-year term as Commander-in-Chief. With such challenges as a bludgeoned economy, an 11-million-people-short workforce, an inferior education system, a massive, but skeletal health care system, two wars, and the threat of conflict throughout the remaining corners of the globe, it seems Washington, DC, has been transformed into a stage with the whole world watching.

Will he hold true to the promise of change? The promise of hope and not more of the same?

"This is our moment," he told thousands during his victory speech on a clear, starry night back in

November. "This is our time – to put our people back to work and open doors of opportunity for our kids; to restore prosperity and promote the cause of peace; to reclaim the American Dream and reaffirm that fundamental truth – that out of many, we are one; that while we breathe, we hope, and where we are met with cynicism, and doubt, and those who tell us that we can't, we will respond with that timeless creed that sums up the spirit of a people: Yes We Can."

Just after taking the oath of office he vowed again: "With hope and virtue, let us brave once more the icy currents, and endure what storms may come. Let it be said by our children's children that when we were tested we refused to let this journey end, that we did not turn back nor did we falter; and with eyes fixed on the horizon and God's grace upon us, we carried forth that great gift of freedom and delivered it

safely to future generations."

And thus marked the start of a new journey. A new vision. A new hope. A new spirit.







***“With hope and virtue, let us brave once more the icy currents, and endure what storms may come.” – President Barack Obama***