

An Open Letter to President Barack Obama

July 15, 2010

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Nineteen months into your first term, the Great Recession that you inherited from your predecessor lingers like a severe case of poison ivy. Its rash of joblessness has spread to every part of the body politics. And in many communities, its toxic oils have formed large, weeping blisters.

Please watch this graphic display of how those toxic oils spread across America: [The Geography of a Recession](#). This series of maps show unemployment at the county level, and was produced originally by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Clearly, this rash of joblessness started long before you took the oath of office. It grew in intensity after Lehman Brothers collapsed in September 2008. And, despite efforts to alleviate its impact with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, this poison spread to more and more Americans. A recently released survey by the Pew Charitable Trusts reported that 55 percent of working Americans were affected directly by this Grave Recession.

And yet, the jobless are being treated as if *they* were the contagion. That is simply not true. The original contamination came from the burning of toxic oils – in this case, toxic assets created by the banks, hedge funds and insurance companies – and the resulting smoke spread farther than anyone could imagine and carried those toxic oils to over 31 million Americans.

To put it mildly, the severe inflammation has proven resistant to the first aid applied. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act was the right salve applied at the right time. And like calamine lotion, the ARRA gave substantial yet localized relief. But the Recovery Act's ability to provide such temporary relief diminished with time and the re-application of that salve makes little sense.

The scope, duration and intensity of America's joblessness now demand much stronger medicine. If this was literally, not figuratively, a severe case of poison ivy, dermatologists would recommend steroid treatments. Seen as a last resort, systemic forms of steroids are only prescribed when other agents have not worked.

President Obama, we are now there. America and its jobless millions have suffered long enough. It is time for the last resort – a job creation program on steroids.

Hire US, America (<http://tinyurl.com/yjvndyk>) is a comprehensive approach designed by the unemployed themselves. But there are thousands of great job creation ideas proffered by public officials and private citizens alike. Business, labor and academia have all offered their recommendations. So, there is no lack of ideas on how to put America back to work.

What is missing is the political consensus that we, as a Nation, have no other choice but to treat this horrible rash of joblessness aggressively. What is missing is the political will to act decisively, to act with a sense of urgency.

And with all due respect, Mr. President, only you can forge that consensus and demonstrate that will to act decisively.

America will match your drive and determination to end this jobs crisis. And her jobless millions, grateful for the chance to work again, will continue to follow your lead.

In Unity – Strength,

Rick Sloan
Acting Executive Director
Ur Union of Unemployed