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Remarks by the President on the American Jobs Act

Eastfield College, Mesquite, Texas
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THE PRESIDENT: Hello, Dallas! Thank you so much. Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat, have a seat. (Applause.) Thank you.

It's good to be back in Texas. (Applause.) It is good to be back in Texas. I am thrilled¹ to have the opportunity to be with all of you.

I want to thank a couple of people. First of all, the mayor of Mesquite, John Monaco is here. (Applause.) And the mayor of Dallas, Mike Rawlings is in the house. (Applause.) And I want to thank the former mayor of Dallas, who I stole from you to be one of the best trade representatives this country has ever had -- my dear friend Ron Kirk is in the house. (Applause.)

I also want to thank -- I want to thank the folks over at the Children's Lab School, who gave me a tour, and I want to especially thank Kim Russell for sharing her story. Thank you, Kim. (Applause.)

Now, teachers like Kim are why I came here today. Teachers like Kim and her former students. That's why I've been traveling all across this country for the last few weeks. These are the toughest times we've been through since the Great Depression. And because the problems that led to the recession weren't caused overnight, they won't be solved overnight. That's the hard truth. It took us a decade to see the culmination² of some of the bad ideas that had been put into place -- the lack of regulation on Wall Street, middle-class folks struggling.

So we're not going to solve all those problems overnight. But that doesn't mean we have to sit back and do nothing about this economy. There are steps we can take right now to put people back to work. There are steps we can take right now to put money in the pockets of working Americans. There are things we can do right now to restore³ some of the security and fairness that has always defined this great country of ours. And that's what will happen if this Congress will finally get its act together and pass the American Jobs Act. (Applause.)

It has now been three weeks since I sent this bill⁴ to Congress. It's a detailed plan to get this economy moving. It's the kind of proposals that, in the past, Democrats and Republicans have supported. There's nothing radical in this proposal. These are the kinds of things that in the past we've had bipartisan⁵ support for. It's fully paid for. And

that's why I need you to help me convince the people you sent to Washington that it's time to pass this jobs bill and get America working again. (Applause.)

Now, you just heard Kim's story. There are teachers and educators like Kim all over the country. I met a first-grade teacher from Minnesota at the White House who was laid off⁶ after having been named the Teacher of the Year in her school district. Her peers, students, determined she was the best teacher in her school district -- she got laid off. There's a teacher over in Grand Prairie, Texas, who actually chose to resign in order to protect the job of a single mom⁷ who also taught at the school. Think about that. Here in Dallas, all across the state of Texas, you've seen too many teachers lose their jobs because of budget cuts⁸. And thousands more could be at risk in the coming year.

Now, understand, this doesn't just hurt these teachers. It doesn't just hurt them and their families. It hurts our children. It undermines our future as a nation. If you've got Kim, an AP teacher⁹, not in the classroom, those kids aren't going to have the same opportunities. And I want everybody to understand that what is at stake¹⁰ is nothing less than our ability to compete in this 21st century economy.

I told the story -- a while back I was visiting South Korea and had lunch with the President there. And I asked the President, I said, what's your biggest challenge right now? He said, well, my biggest challenge is our parents are way too demanding. He said, they want their kid to learn English when they're in first grade. So in addition to all the science and all the math classes, I'm now having to ship in teachers from outside the country just to teach our kids English, starting in elementary school. This is what the President of South Korea said.

They can't hire teachers fast enough. They call them "nation builders" -- that's what they call teachers in Korea, "nation builders," because they know that educating their children is the best way to make sure their economy is growing, make sure that good jobs are locating there, making sure they've got the scientists and the engineers and the technicians who can build things and ship them all around the world. That's what he understands. And the whole country supports him. Here in America, we're laying off teachers in droves¹¹. It makes no sense. It has to stop. It has to stop.

Now, this bill will prevent up to 280,000 teachers from losing their jobs. (Applause.) This bill will support almost 40,000 jobs right here in the great state of Texas. (Applause.) So here's what I need you to do: Tell Congress to pass this bill and put teachers back in the classroom where they belong. (Applause.)

It's not just teachers. Tell Congress to pass the American Jobs Act, and there also will be funding¹² to save the jobs of firefighters and police officers and first responders¹³ who risk their lives to keep us safe. That's what happens if they pass this bill. (Applause.)

Pass this jobs bill, and hundreds of thousands of unemployed construction workers will get back on the job rebuilding our schools, rebuilding our roads, rebuilding our bridges, rebuilding our ports, rebuilding our airports. The other day I visited a busy bridge in Ohio -- actually it's between Ohio and Kentucky. Speaker Boehner, he's from Ohio; Republican Leader McConnell is from Kentucky. I thought it would be a good place to have an event. (Laughter.) This bridge is classified as functionally obsolete. That's a fancy way of saying it's old and needs to be fixed. (Laughter.)

There's a public transit project in Houston that would help clear up one of the worst areas of traffic in the country. There are schools all over this country that are literally falling apart -- roof crumbling¹⁴, rain dripping in, too hot in the summer, too cold in the winter, science labs¹⁵ all worn out¹⁶, got a couple of beakers¹⁷ and that's it, built back in the '50s before the Internet was invented. (Laughter.)

That's an outrage¹⁸. Understand, America became an economic superpower in part because we had the best infrastructure. We built the transcontinental railroad, the Interstate Highway System, the Hoover Dam, Grand Central Station. How can we sit back and now we're seeing China build better airports than us, Europe build better railroads than us, Korea more broadband access than us - at a time when millions of unemployed construction workers could be building all that stuff right here in the United States of America. (Applause.)

My question to Congress is, what are you waiting for? The work is there to be done. There are workers ready to do it. Contractors, they're begging for work. They'll come in on time, under budget. Interest rates have never been lower. It is time for us to put those folks back to work. It's time for them to pass the American Jobs Act. Pass this bill. (Applause.)

If Congress passes this jobs bill, new companies will get new tax credits for hiring America's veterans. Think about it. We ask these men and women to leave their families, disrupt¹⁹ their careers, risk their lives for our nation. The last thing they should have to do is to fight for a job when they come home. (Applause.)

Tell Congress "Pass this bill", so we can help the people who create most of the new jobs in this country: America's small businesses. Folks in the other party, they like to talk a good game about helping America's job creators. "Let's help America's job creators." Okay, let's do that. This jobs bill provides tax cuts for nearly every small business in America. If you hire new employees, or raise your workers' wages, you get an extra tax cut. (Applause.) So my message to Congress is, don't just talk about helping job creators; actually help some job creators by passing this bill.

Here's another reason why they need to pass this bill. On January 1st, if nothing is done, everybody here is going to get a tax hike²⁰.

AUDIENCE: Booo! (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: That's right. See, back in December, I got an agreement with the Republicans to lower the payroll tax²¹ so that there would be more money in folks' pockets and we could protect ourselves against recession. Now, since that time, we've had a tsunami in Japan; we've had the Arab Spring, which shot up²² gas prices. We've had problems in Europe. And so the economy has gotten weaker.

That tax cut is scheduled to expire by the end of this year. But if the American Jobs Act passes, the typical working family in Texas will have an extra \$1,400 in their pockets. (Applause.) Now, if the bill doesn't pass, virtually every worker in America will see their taxes go up -- at the worst possible time.

So I'm not about to let that happen, Texas. (Applause.) Look, Republicans say they're the party of tax cuts. Tell them to prove it. Tell them to fight just as hard for tax cuts for working Americans as they do for the wealthiest Americans. (Applause.) Pass this bill.

Now, what you'll hear from some of these folks is, well, we're not going to support any new spending that's not paid for. All right, I agree with that. I think that's important. So I laid out²³ a plan to pay for the American Jobs Act, and then some -- a plan that not only pays for the bill to put folks back to work to raise our growth rate, but to also pay down²⁴ more of our debt over time. It builds on the \$1 trillion in spending cuts that I already signed this summer, making it one of the biggest spending cuts in history.

So, look, I believe we've got to make cuts in programs that don't work and things that aren't helping the economy grow so we can pay for the things that are. Right? We all believe that a government needs to live within its means²⁵. We all agree with that. But we also believe that how you bring down the deficit is important. If we want to actually close the deficit -- not just talk about closing the deficit, not just using it for a campaign slogan, not just playing politics -- if we want to actually close the deficit, then you've got to combine the tough cuts with a strategy to ask the wealthiest Americans and the biggest corporations to do their part, to pay their fair share²⁶. (Applause.)

Look, I'm not telling you anything you don't know. Do you really think the tax code is written for you?

AUDIENCE: No!

THE PRESIDENT: You think the tax code - maybe you've got a bunch of lobbyists in Washington. Maybe you've got a bunch of special interests in there in the back rooms trying to carve something out²⁷ - I don't know. But most folks don't. So the tax code, the way it's structured, is not fair. And so what we've said is, let's reform our tax code based on a very simple principle, and it will raise more money without hurting working families. Here's the principle: Middle-class families, working families, should not pay higher tax rates than millionaires or billionaires. (Applause.) I don't know how you argue against that; seems pretty straightforward to me. Warren Buffett's secretary shouldn't pay a higher tax rate than Warren Buffett. (Applause.)

Now, when I point this out - it seems very logical to me, but when I point this out, some of the Republicans in Congress, they say, oh, you're engaging in class warfare²⁸. Class warfare? Let me tell you something. Years ago, a great American had a different view. All right? I'm going to get the quote just so you know I'm not making this up. (Laughter.) Great American, said that he thought it was "crazy" that certain tax loophole²⁹s made it possible for millionaires to pay nothing, while a bus driver was paying 10 percent of his salary. All right?

You know who this guy was? Wasn't a Democrat. Wasn't some crazy socialist. It was Ronald Reagan. (Applause.) It was Ronald Reagan. Last time I checked, Republicans all thought Reagan made some sense. (Laughter.) So the next time you hear one of those Republicans in Congress accusing you of class warfare, you just tell them, I'm with Ronald Reagan. (Laughter.) I agree with Ronald Reagan that it's crazy that a bus driver pays a higher tax rate than a millionaire because of some loophole in the tax code³⁰. (Applause.)

And by the way, I don't mind being called a warrior for the working class. You guys need somebody fighting for you. (Applause.) The only warfare I've been seeing is the war against middle-class families and their ability to get ahead in this economy.

And let me make one last point, because you'll hear this argument made: This is not about trying to punish success. This is the land of opportunity. And what's great about our country is our belief that anybody can succeed. You've got a good idea? Go out

there and start a new business. You've got a great product? You invented something? I hope you make millions of dollars. We want to see more Steve Jobs and more Bill Gates - creating value, creating jobs. That's great.

Your current mayor did great work in the private sector creating jobs, creating value. That's important. But remember, nobody got there on their own. I'm standing here today, Michelle is standing here today -- or Michelle's not standing here today -- (laughter) -- but I know you wish she was. I'm standing here today, Michelle -- we always remind ourselves, the reason we've had this extraordinary opportunity is because somewhere along the line, some teacher helped us. Somewhere along the line, we got a student loan. We lived in a country that could move products and services everywhere. We lived in a country where if there's a fire, somebody comes and puts out the fire. If you're burglarized³¹, somebody is coming to try to solve the crime. I'm sure the mayor of Dallas feels the same way. We're here because somebody laid the foundation for success. So the question is: Are we going to maintain that foundation and strengthen that foundation for the next generation?

And this is all about priorities. This is about choices. If we want to actually lower the deficit and put people back to work -- if we want to invest in our future, if we want to have the best science, the best technology, the best research, we want to continue to be inventing new drugs to solve cancer and making sure that the new cars of the future that are running on electricity are made here in America -- if we want to do all those things, then the money has got to come from somewhere. I wish I could do it all for free. I wish I could say to all of you, you don't have to pay any taxes and companies can keep all their stuff and rich people don't have to do anything, and somehow it all works out.

But you know what, we tried it and it didn't work. So now you've got a choice. Would you rather keep tax loopholes for big corporations that don't need it? Or would you rather put construction workers back to work rebuilding our schools and our roads and our bridges? (Applause.) Would you rather I keep a tax break that I don't need and wasn't looking for, didn't ask for and if I don't have it, I won't miss it? Or do you want to put teachers like Kim back to work and help small businesses and cut taxes for middle-class families? (Applause.) This is a choice that we've got to make.

And I believe, and I think you believe, it's time we build an economy that creates good, solid, middle-class jobs in this country. It's time to build an economy that values the -- that honors the values of hard work and responsibility. It's time for us to build an economy that lasts, that's not just based on speculation and financial shenanigans, but rather is based on us making stuff and selling things to other people around the world instead of just importing from all around the world. (Applause.) That's the America I believe in. That's the America you believe in.

And, Dallas, that starts now. That starts with your help. Yesterday, the Republican Majority Leader in Congress, Eric Cantor, said that right now he won't even let this jobs bill have a vote in the House of Representatives.

AUDIENCE: Boo!

THE PRESIDENT: This is what he said. Won't even let it be debated. Won't even give it a chance to be debated on the floor of the House of Representatives. Think about that. I mean, what's the problem? Do they not have the time? (Laughter.) They just had a week off³². (Laughter.) Is it inconvenient?

Look, I'd like Mr. Cantor to come down here to Dallas and explain what exactly in this jobs bill does he not believe in. What exactly is he opposed to?

Does he not believe in rebuilding America's roads and bridges? Does he not believe in tax breaks for small businesses, or efforts to help our veterans?

Mr. Cantor should come down to Dallas and look Kim Russell in the eye and tell her why she doesn't deserve to be back in the classroom doing what she loves, helping our kids. Come tell her students why they don't deserve to have their teacher back.

Come tell Dallas construction workers why they should be sitting idle instead of out there on the job.

Tell small business owners and workers in this community why you'd rather defend tax breaks for folks who don't need them -- for millionaires -- rather than tax cuts for middle-class families.

And if you won't do that, at least put this jobs bill up for a vote so that the entire country knows exactly where members of Congress stand. (Applause.)

Put your cards on the table. I realize that some Republicans in Washington are resistant, partly because I proposed it. (Laughter and applause.) I mean, they -- if I took their party platform and proposed it, they'd suddenly be against it. (Laughter.)

We've had folks in Congress who have said they shouldn't pass this bill because it would give me a win. So they're thinking about the next election. They're not thinking about folks who are hurting right now. They're thinking, well, how is that going to play in the next election?

Give me a win? Give me a break! (Laughter.) That's why folks are fed up with Washington. (Applause.) This isn't about giving me a win. This isn't about giving Democrats or Republicans a win. This is about giving people who are hurting a win. (Applause.) This is about giving small business owners a win, and entrepreneurs a win, and students a win, and working families a win. This is about giving America a win. (Applause.)

Dallas, the next election is 13 months away. The American people don't have the luxury of waiting 13 months. A lot of folks are living week to week; some are living paycheck to paycheck; some folks are living day to day. (Applause.) They need action on jobs, and they need it now. They want Congress to do what they were elected to do. They want Congress to do their job. Do your job, Congress! (Applause.)

I need you all to lift your voice -- (applause) -- not just here in Dallas, but anyone watching, anyone listening, everybody following online. I need you to call and tweet and fax and visit and email your congressperson and tell them the time for gridlock and games is over. The time for action is now. (Applause.)

Tell them that if you want to create jobs -- pass this bill. (Applause.)

If you want to put teachers back in the classroom -- pass this bill. (Applause.)

If you want construction workers back on the job -- pass this bill. (Applause.)

If you want tax cuts for the middle class and small business owners -- pass this bill.

You want to help some veterans? Pass this bill. (Applause.)

Now is the time to act. We are not people who sit back in tough times³⁴. We step up in tough times. We make things happen in tough times. (Applause.) We've been through tougher times before, and we got through them. We're going to get through these to a brighter day, but we're going to have to act. God helps those who help themselves. We need to help ourselves right now.

Let's get together. Let's get to work. Let's get busy. Let's pass this bill. Let's make sure that we are shaping³⁵ a destiny³⁶ for our children that we are proud of, and let's remind the entire world why the United States of America is the greatest nation on the planet. (Applause.)

God bless you. God bless the United States of America. (Applause.)

Vocabulary:

- 1: begeistert
- 2: Höhepunkt
- 3: wiederherstellen
- 4: Gesetzesvorlage
- 5: von beiden Parteien (Republicans und Democrats)
- 6: to lay s.o. off: kündigen, entlassen
- 7: alleinerziehende Mutter
- 8: Einsparungen, Kürzungen
- 9: AP = advanced placement, ca. Leistungskurse
- 10: (steht) auf dem Spiel
- 11: in Scharen
- 12: Finanzierung, Mittel
- 13: Helfer vor Ort, Ersthelfer
- 14: bröckeln
- 15: short form of 'laboratories'
- 16: abgenutzt
- 17: Messbecher
- 18: ein Ding der Unmöglichkeit
- 19: unterbrechen (wie 'to interrupt')
- 20: Steuererhöhung
- 21: Lohnsteuer
- 22: in die Höhe treiben
- 23: entwerfen
- 24: bar abzahlen
- 25: nicht über seine Verhältnisse leben, nicht zu viel ausgeben
- 26: gerechter Anteil
- 27: etwas zurechtschnitzen, sich etwas zurechtbasteln
- 28: Klassenkampf
- 29: Schlupfloch, Lücke
- 30: Steuergesetz
- 31: to be burglarized: Opfer eines Einbruchs werden/sein
- 32: frei (Urlaubstage)
- 33: tatenlos
- 34: harte Zeiten
- 35: formen
- 36: Schicksal, Zukunft