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future. We can continue to show how two countries can work together in ways that pursue global cooperation and integration to mutual benefit.

And as we all know, one of President Obama's big missions is to continue world leadership by the United States of America, but in a way that is more collaborative. And I'm convinced that by working with our country, he will have no greater opportunity than to demonstrate exactly how that model can operate over the next 4 years.

President Obama. And let me just say that, to echo what the Prime Minister said, we have no doubt about Canada's commitment to security in the United States as well as Canada. Obviously, we've got long-lasting relationships around NORAD, for example, and the same is true with respect to border security. There's been extraordinary cooperation, and we expect that that will continue.

And Prime Minister Harper is right. It's a safe bet that the United States and Canada will continue to enjoy an extraordinary friendship, and together I think we've got an opportunity to show the world that the values that we care about—of democracy, of human rights, of economic growth and prosperity—that these are values that the world can embrace, and that we can show leadership. And I'm very much looking forward to working with this Government and all Canadians in order to promote these values.

I want to also, by the way, thank some of the Canadians who came over the border to campaign for me during the election. [*Laughter*] It was much appreciated. And I'm looking forward to coming back to Canada as soon as it warms up. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 2:46 p.m. at Parliament Hill. In his remarks, the President referred to President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico; and his brother-in-law Konrad Ng. A reporter referred to Gen. David D. McKiernan, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan.

Remarks to the United States Conference of Mayors
February 20, 2009

Thank you everybody. Thank you. Please have a seat. Thank you so much. Whenever I have the opportunity to meet with mayors, I think about how I got my start doing what you do each day: working with folks at the local level and doing our best to make a real impact on the lives of ordinary Americans. And that's just another reason why I'm so happy to welcome all of you here today.

I want to offer—take a little personal prerogative here and welcome my own hometown mayor, my friend Rich Daley. His steady leadership has proven again and again that the American city can be a place of boundless opportunity and a source of solutions to our public problems; he has made a deep and lasting difference in the quality of life for millions of Chicagoans. I'm surprised he's still talking to me because I stole Arne Duncan from him—[*laughter*]—but I am confident that he will continue to make great strides.

I see friends from all over the place; some old friends—well, not old in years, but people who I've known a long time. My other hometown mayor, Mufi, it's great to see you all the way from Honolulu. I've got Mayor Riley and others who are in attendance; Shirley Franklin, doing great work; and Mayor Villaraigosa and Mayor Dellums from—we've got the California contingent. So I'm grateful to all of you.

And I think all of you understand that we meet at such an urgent time. Last night, I signed an Executive order establishing the White House Office of Urban Affairs. And I've chosen Adolfo Carrion to be its first director. Adolfo wrote a real success story in the Bronx as borough president, and now he's going to be working with all of you to write our next success stories in cities across the country.

He's going to be responsible for coordinating all Federal urban programs, and I've asked him to set up an advisory council with mayors and other urban leaders so that we can

develop a new metropolitan strategy based on the lessons that you've learned. Now, rebuilding our economies and renewing our cities is going to require a true partnership between mayors and the White House, and that partnership has to begin right now.

Those of you who have traveled great distances to be here come from different parties and philosophies. You govern very different cities; they're made up of different citizenries with different demographic makeups. But today, in the face of our common challenges, you're all hearing the same stories. I know because I'm getting letters from constituents all across the country, in many of your cities.

But you're on the frontlines in our communities. You know what happens when folks get laid off or they lose their homes or their health care, and they turn to the mayor's office for help. And just as your services stretch, your classrooms get crowded, and your streets grow less safe, your budgets shrink. You can't deficit spend, so you face impossible choices: raising taxes, cutting essential services, laying off teachers, firefighters, police officers.

And that's why the recovery plan we put into action this week is so important. It's a plan that will save or create 3.5 million jobs over the next 2 years, will help those hardest hit by our economic crisis. It will aid State and local governments in hopes you can avoid those excruciating choices.

It provides greater unemployment insurance for nearly 18 million Americans and protects health care for 7 million who lost their health care along with their jobs. It includes the most progressive tax cuts in our history, spurring job creation and putting money into the pockets of 95 percent of all hard-working families. It invests in what works for our cities by funding programs like the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant and the COPS program, which boost public safety and bring down crime. It rewards responsibility, making sure that if you work hard, you won't have to raise a child below the poverty line.

But what makes this recovery plan so important isn't just the jobs it will create or the immediate help it provides; it's that we are putting Americans to work doing the work America needs done in critical areas that have been neglected for too long. So this plan does more to lay a new foundation for our cities' growth and opportunity than anything Washington has done in generations, and it will bring real and lasting change for generations to come.

Because we know we can't build our economic future on the transportation and information networks of the past, we're remaking our cities with the largest new investment in our Nation's infrastructure since Eisenhower built an Interstate Highway System in the 1950s. Ray LaHood is going to be busy because we're putting 400,000 men and women to work rebuilding our crumbling roads and our bridges, repairing our faulty dams and levees, replacing our aging water and sewer pipes, and rolling out broadband lines to nearly every community in America. We are going to unleash the potential of all our regions by connecting them with world-class transit systems and high-speed rail, making our metropolitan areas more livable and sustainable in the process.

Because we know education is the single best bet we can make to change the odds of our children and our cities, we are making the largest investment in education in our Nation's history. It will prevent harmful education cuts and save jobs of tens of thousands of teachers, 14,000 just in New York City. And it will make a historic investment in early childhood education and upgrade classrooms and libraries and labs across America so that millions of our children are prepared to compete in the 21st century.

Because we know that spiraling health care costs are crushing families and businesses alike and straining budgets across government, we're taking the most meaningful steps in years to modernize our health care system. We're going to computerize America's medical records while maintaining rigorous privacy standards, saving billions of dollars and countless lives. We'll focus on prevention, keeping millions of Americans from having to set into the doctor's office in the first place. Taken together with the earlier enactment this month of long-delayed laws to extend health care to millions of—more children of working families, we've done more in 30 days to advance the cause of health care reform than this country has done in a decade.

And because we know we can't power America's future on energy that's controlled by foreign dictators, we're making an investment that within 3 years will double the renewable energy output it's taken us 35 years to reach. We'll provide tax credits and loan guarantees to companies that create this energy, allowing them to expand rather than lay people off. We'll fund the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant you conceived, saving our cities and our consumers money. We'll build a bigger, better, smarter electricity grid that delivers clean energy from communities that produce it to the cities that need it.

So these are the steps we're taking to help you turn this crisis into opportunity and bring our cities into the future. Now, Washington can't solve all the problems facing our cities, and I know you don't expect us to. Instead of waiting for Washington, many of you have already made our cities laboratories of change, coming up with innovative new ways to solve the problems of our time.

And one of the great pleasures of running for President was having a chance to see great work on renewable energy in Des Moines or, you know, seeing what kinds of wonderful companies are being created in Seattle, and hearing about some of the urban planning strategies that are taking place in Charleston. So all of you have already taken the ball and run with it, even when you weren't getting help from here. But it won't be bad to get some help because—[*applause*].

You know, instead of debating the existence of climate change, mayors like Greg Nickels in Seattle are leading efforts to make cities greener and more efficient. Instead of just talking about health care, mayors like Gavin Newsom in San Francisco have been ensuring that those in need receive it. Instead of wringing your hands over poverty, you've got Antonio in Los Angeles making relentless efforts to alleviate it.

You shouldn't have to succeed, though, despite Washington; you should be succeeding with a hand from Washington, and that's what you're going to get now.

Now, what is required in return, what I will need from all of you, is unprecedented responsibility and accountability on all of our parts. The American people are watching. They need this plan to work. They expect to see the money that they've earned, that they've worked so hard to earn, spent in its intended purposes without waste, without inefficiency, without fraud.

And that's why I'm assigning a team of managers to ensure that every dollar is spent wisely. And that's why we've created recovery.gov, so that every American can go online to see how their money is spent and hold their Federal, State, and local officials to the highest standards they expect.

So I want to be clear about this: We cannot tolerate business as usual, not in Washington, not in our State capitals, not in America's cities and towns. We will use the new tools that the recovery act gives us to watch the taxpayers' money with more rigor and transparency than ever. If a Federal agency proposes a project that will waste that money, I will not hesitate to call them out on it and put a stop to it.

And I want everybody here to be on notice that if a local government does the same, I will call them out on it and use the full power of my office and our administration to stop it. We have asked for the unprecedented trust of the American people to deal boldly with the greatest economic crisis we've seen in decades and the privilege of investing unprecedented amounts of their hard-earned money to address this crisis. And with that comes unprecedented obligations to spend that money wisely, free from politics and free from personal agendas.

On this I will not compromise or tolerate any shortcuts. The American people are looking to us, each of you, as well as myself and Joe and others in our administration, for leadership, and it's up to us to reward their faith.

Now, this plan doesn't mark the end of what we'll do together; it marks the beginning. My administration has outlined plans to stabilize, repair, and reform our banking system, to get credit flowing to families and businesses, to stem the spread of foreclosures and keep families in their homes. Together we will tackle the urban challenges of our time and foster diverse, creative, and imaginative economies

that bring opportunity to every corner of our cities.

We'll do all this because despite the different backgrounds of the mayors in this room, we all share the same vision for our cities: vibrant places that provide our children with every chance to learn and to grow; that allow our businesses and workers the best opportunity to innovate and succeed; that let our older Americans live out their best years in the midst of all that metropolitan life can offer.

I know this change is possible. I know because I saw it in—all those years ago in neighborhoods on the south side of Chicago, where ordinary Americans came together and worked alongside the mayor's office to forge a better future. I know because I've seen it in cities across this country, where many of you that I had a chance to meet with, I saw how you focused on fresh ideas over stale ideology and you moved your cities forward. And I know it because I see it in the faces of Americans everywhere who are ready to roll up their sleeves and join in the work of remaking this Nation.

So now it falls to us to seize the possibilities of this moment and convert peril into promise, see to it that our cities and our people emerge from this moment stronger than they were before. Starting today, that's what you and I are going to do together. And I'm absolutely confident that our people will benefit and people will look back and say that this was a turning point; this was a moment where, in the midst of great crisis, leadership was shown, and we created a new platform for success for all Americans in the future.

Thank you so much, everybody. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:36 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago, IL; Secretary of Education Arne Duncan; Mayor Mufi Hannemann of Honolulu, HI; Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr., of Charleston, SC; Mayor Shirley Franklin of Atlanta, GA; Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa of Los Angeles, CA; Mayor Ron Dellums of Oakland, CA; Secretary of Transportation Raymond H. LaHood; and Vice President Joe Biden. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Biden.

The President's Weekly Address
February 21, 2009

Earlier this week, I signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the most sweeping economic recovery plan in history. Because of this plan, 3½ million Americans will now go to work doing the work that America needs done.

I am grateful to Congress, Governors, and mayors across the country and to all of you whose support made this critical step possible.

Because of what we did together, there will now be shovels in the ground, cranes in the air, and workers rebuilding our crumbling roads and bridges and repairing our faulty levees and dams. Because of what we did, companies large and small that produce renewable energy can now apply for loan guarantees and tax credits and find ways to grow, instead of laying people off, and families can lower their energy bills by weatherizing their homes.

Because of what we did, our children can now graduate from 21st century schools, and millions more can do what was unaffordable just last week and get their college degree. Because of what we did, lives will be saved and health costs will be cut with new computerized medical records. Because of what we did, there will now be police on the beat, firefighters on the job, and teachers preparing lesson plans who thought they would not be able to continue pursuing their critical missions. And ensure that all of this is done with an unprecedented level of transparency and accountability, I have assigned a team of managers to make sure that precious tax dollars are invested wisely and well.

Because of what we did, 95 percent of all working families will get a tax cut, in keeping with a promise I made on the campaign. And I'm pleased to announce that this morning the Treasury Department began directing