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here to do the same thing we've been doing or to take small steps forward, I came to provide the sweeping change that this country demanded when it went to the polls in November. That is the change this budget starts to make, and that is the change I'll be fighting for in the weeks ahead—change that will grow our economy, expand our middle class, and keep the American Dream alive for all those men and women who have believed in this journey from the day it began.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:35 p.m. on February 27 in the Library at the White House for broadcast on February 28. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 27 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 28.

Remarks on the Nomination of Governor Kathleen Sebelius To Be Secretary of Health and Human Services and Nancy-Ann DeParle To Be Director of the White House Office for Health Reform

March 2, 2009

The President. Hello, everybody. Last week, I unveiled a fiscal blueprint for America's future, one that reflects the stark reality of our financial crisis while laying a lasting foundation for our common prosperity. It makes both the sacrifices and the investments necessary to tackle the great challenges of our time, challenges we face today as a consequence of decisions we deferred yesterday. And one of these great challenges is health care.

The good news is that we have already done more to advance the cause of health care reform in the last month than we have in the last decade. We've provided and protected health insurance for 11 million children whose parents work full time. We've invested in preventive care to help keep people from having to go to the doctor in the first place, and in electronic health records and new technology that will ensure privacy while saving billions of dollars and countless lives.

And today I can announce that under the recovery plan we've put into action, $155 million will go toward supporting 126 new health centers across America. These health centers will expand access to care by helping people in need—many with no health insurance—obtain access to comprehensive primary and preventive health care services. That helps relieve the burden on emergency rooms across the country, which have become primary care clinics for too many who lack coverage, often at taxpayer expense. This action will create thousands of new jobs, help provide health care to an estimated 750,000 low-income Americans across the country, and take another important step toward affordable, accessible health care for all.

But our current economic crisis has only heightened the urgency of our health care challenge. In the last 8 years, premiums have grown four times faster than wages. In each of these years, 1 million Americans have lost their health insurance. The crushing cost of health care causes a bankruptcy in America every 30 seconds; and by the end of this year, it could cause 1.5 million Americans to lose their homes. It's a crisis punishing families, battering businesses, squeezing our States, and increasingly, imperiling our own budget. Health care is one of the fastest-growing expenses in the Federal budget, and it's one we simply cannot sustain.

That is why we cannot fail to act yet again. If we're going to help families, save businesses, and improve the long-term economic health of our Nation, we must realizing that fixing what's wrong with our health care system is no longer just a moral imperative, but a fiscal imperative. Health care reform that reduces costs while expanding coverage is no longer just a dream we hope to achieve, it's a necessity we have to achieve.

Today I'm proud to announce key members of the team I'm assembling to help do just that: Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius for my Secretary of Health and Human Services and Nancy-Ann DeParle as Director of the White House Office for Health Reform.

Now, there's no easy formula for fixing our health care system. There will be many different opinions and ideas about how to achieve this reform. And that's why I'm bringing together business and labor, doctors and insurers, Democrats and Republicans, as well as ordinary Americans from all walks of life to the White House this Thursday for a historic health care forum.

What is required, however, is a commitment to reform that focuses not on Democratic ideas or Republican ideas, but on ideas that work to rein in costs, expand access, and improve the quality of health care for the American people.

Kathleen Sebelius embodies such a commitment to bipartisan accomplishment. She is, after all, the daughter of a Democratic Governor and the daughter-in-law of a Republican Congressman. But she's forged a reputation for bipartisan problem-solving in her own right. As Governor of Kansas, she inherited a billion-dollar deficit, but by eliminating waste and inefficiency while making smart choices, she balanced the State budget without raising taxes. And time and again, on energy and education, jobs and health care, she's bridged the partisan divide and worked with a Republican legislature to get things done for the people of Kansas.

And that's why I'm so proud that one of the most esteemed political leaders of our time, Bob Dole, is here, as well as my former colleague, Pat Roberts, here as well—people in Kansas, we stick together. And I've got my own Kansas roots here, so I'm particularly pleased to be joined by so many Kansans.

Now, Kathleen has—also knows health care inside and out. She's won praise for her expertise from stakeholders across the spectrum, from consumer groups to insurers. Over 8 years as State insurance commissioner, she refused campaign contributions from insurance companies and protected the people of Kansas from increases to their premiums by blocking a takeover of the State's largest insurer. She helped draft a proposed national bill of rights for patients and served as the president of the National Association of Insurance Commissioners.

And as a Governor she's been on the frontlines of our health care crisis. She has a deep knowledge of what the burden of crushing costs does to our families and businesses. That's why she fought to guarantee Kansans access to quality, affordable health care, and sought to secure it for every Kansas child from birth to age 5.

Kathleen has a remarkable intellect, unquestioned integrity, and the kind of pragmatic wisdom you'll tend to find in a Kansan. I know she will bring some much needed grace and good humor to Washington, and she will be a tremendous asset to my Cabinet.

Now, as critical as the task of health care reform is, Governor Sebelius will also oversee a Department with wide-ranging responsibilities essential to the well-being of the American people. We rely on the Food and Drug Administration to ensure the safety of our Nation's food and drug supply. We depend on the Center for Disease Control to make certain our Nation is prepared for pandemic disease outbreak or bioterrorism attacks. We expect the National Institutes of Health to keep America at the forefront of medical research, and work toward a cure for cancer in our time. And for as long as I am President, these agencies will be led by exceptional individuals who stand on the side of the American people; who push politics aside in favor of proven science; who eschew stale ideology for sound ideas and a focus on what works.

I'm also proud to announce that Kathleen will have an excellent partner at the White House in Nancy, one of the Nation's leading experts on health care and regulatory issues. As commissioner of the Department of Human Services in Tennessee, she saw firsthand our health care system's impact on workers and families. In the Clinton administration, she handled budget matters for Federal health care programs, and took on the tremendous task of managing Medicare and Medicaid. I have absolute confidence in her ability to lead the public and legislative effort to ensure quality, affordable health care for every American.

Let me close by saying one last thing. I realize that there are those who simply don't

believe Washington can bring about this change. And the odds are long. It's failed too many times. There are too many special interests and entrenched lobbyists invested in the status quo.

That's the conventional wisdom, and I understand those doubts. But I also know this: I didn't come to Washington to take the easy route, or to work for the powerful and the well-connected interests who have run this city for too long. I came here to work for the American people. I came here to deliver the sweeping change that they demanded when they went to the polls in November.

Kathleen and Nancy share my resolve; I look forward to working with them as we begin the urgent and immediate task of ensuring quality, affordable health care for every American. And we also know that we're going to need important partners there, so that's why I'm so proud that we have the outstanding Member of the House of Representatives, Henry Waxman, and my own colleague and the head of the finance committee, Max Baucus—they have already shown extraordinary leadership in this process.

The fact that we've got Democrats and Republicans here I hope is a symbol of how we can move this issue forward. I don't think anybody has a silver bullet when it comes to health care. There are some difficult tradeoffs to be made; there are some difficult choices to be made. But what I do know is this: that people of goodwill collectively recognize that the path we're on is unsustainable. It's going to be Kathleen's job and Nancy's job to work with extraordinary leaders, like the ones on this stage, to make sure that we finally deliver health care reform that will save our Federal budget and help American families for generations to come.

Thank you very much.

All right. Kathleen.

[*At this point, Secretary-designate Sebelius made brief remarks.*]

The President. Thank you. You are going to be great.

Secretary-designate Sebelius. Yes, thank you.

The President. Nancy, you want to say a little something? Go ahead.

[*Director-designate DeParle made brief remarks.*]

The President. All right. Thank you, everybody. We're going to go get to work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:57 p.m. in East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Gov. John J. Gilligan of Ohio, father of Secretary-designate Sebelius; and former Sen. Robert J. Dole. The transcript released by the Office of the press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary-designate Sebelius and Director-designate DeParle.

Remarks at the Department of Transportation
March 3, 2009

Thank you, DOT. Thank you very much. Please have a seat. Thank you. Vice President Biden; Secretary LaHood; our cochairs of the TIGER team, Lana Hurdle and Joel Szabat; thank you all for the extraordinary work that you guys are doing each and every day.

I want to begin with some plain talk: The economy's performance in the last quarter of 2008 was the worst in over 25 years. And, frankly, the first quarter of this year holds out little promise for better returns.

From Wall Street to Main Street to kitchen tables all across America, our economic challenge is clear. And now it is up to us to meet it.

One of the challenges is to jump-start lending, so businesses and families can finance the purchases of everything from inventory and payroll to a home, a car, or a college education. We have to jump-start the credit markets and get private lending going again. No matter how good of a job we do here, that's going to be critical. And that's why the Treasury and