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we are giving them a pathway so that they can educate themselves and go as far as their dreams take them.

Thank you very much, Fort Myers. I appreciate you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:11 p.m. at the Harborside Event Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Ben L. Nelson of Bonita Springs, FL.

Remarks on Economic Stabilization in Springfield, Virginia
February 11, 2009

Thank you everybody. I am extraordinarily pleased to be here with Virginia's Governor, an exceptional leader and a great friend of mine, Tim Kaine.

Not far from where we're standing, back in Washington, we continue to have a debate about our economic plan, a plan to create or save more than 3 million jobs in the next few years. And I welcome that conversation. But I am here today because you don't need to travel very far from that debate to see why enacting this plan is both urgent and essential to our recovery, to see that the time for talk has passed and that now is the time to take bold and swift action.

We've passed a version of the American recovery and reinvestment plan through the House. Yesterday we passed a version through the Senate. Now we've got to get a final version to my desk so that I can sign it and so that here in Virginia and across the country the people can use it.

In Virginia, the unemployment rate has surged to its highest level in more than a decade, and it might have been a lot worse were it not for the leadership of Governor Tim Kaine and former Governor, now Senator, Mark Warner. Unemployment claims have doubled in recent months compared to last year. Nationwide, we've lost 3.6 million jobs since this recession began, nearly 600,000 this past month alone.

These are the people I talked to in Elkhart, Indiana, on Monday, which has lost jobs faster than anyplace else in America, with an unemployment rate of over 15 percent. They're the people I met yesterday in Fort Myers, Florida, which has been among the places hardest hit by the foreclosure crisis. These are the folks looking for work, and these are the folks who want to work.

At the same time, look around us. Look at this construction site right where we're standing. We're surrounded by unmet needs and unfinished business in our schools, in our roads, in the systems we employ to treat the sick, in the energy we use to power our homes. And that's the core of my plan: putting people to work doing the work that America needs done.

We're here today because there's a lot of work that needs to be done on our Nation's congested roads and highways, crumbling bridges and levees, and crowded trains and transit systems. Because we know that with investment, we can create transportation and communications systems ready for the demands of the 21st century, and because we also know what happens when we fail to make those investments.

We've seen the consequences of a bridge collapse in Minneapolis. We've seen the consequences of levees failing in New Orleans. We see the consequences every day in ways that may be less drastic, but are, nonetheless, burdens on local communities and economies: time with family lost because of longer daily commutes, growth held back by streets that can't handle new business, money wasted on fuel that's burned in worsening traffic. These are problems that the people of northern Virginia understand acutely.

Governor Kaine understands it acutely. And your Governor has worked valiantly to relieve these transportation pressures while, at the same time, facing enormous budget pressures. What's worse, now States are facing acute new responsibilities during this recession. Local governments are seeing more people filing unemployment claims, signing up for Medicaid, requesting government services. And all the

while, people are spending less, earning less, and paying less in taxes.

So across the country, States need help. And with my plan, help is what they will get. My plan contains the largest investment increase in our Nation's infrastructure since President Eisenhower created the national highway system half a century ago. We'll invest more than $100 billion and create nearly 400,000 jobs rebuilding our roads, our railways, our dangerously deficient dams, bridges, and levees.

Here in Virginia, my plan will create or save almost 100,000 jobs doing work at sites just like this one. Where we're standing, that could mean hundreds of construction jobs. And the benefits of jobs we create directly will multiply across the economy.

For example, this kind of infrastructure project requires heavy equipment. Caterpillar, which manufactures the machines used in this project, has announced some 20,000 layoffs in the last few weeks. And today the chairman and CEO of Caterpillar said that if the American recovery and reinvestment plan passes, his company would be able to rehire some of those employees.

Tomorrow I'm going to East Peoria, Illinois, to visit a Caterpillar manufacturing plant to talk to these workers, because what's at stake here are not abstract numbers or abstract concepts. We're talking about real families that we can help and real jobs that we can save.

My plan will also give tax cuts to 3 million Virginia workers and their families. And we'll provide an additional $100 per month in unemployment benefits to nearly a quarter-million workers in Virginia who've lost their jobs and extend benefits to 46,000 more workers who aren't currently eligible.

So we're at the doorstep of getting this plan through the Congress, but the work is not over. When we do, the challenge will shift to administering successfully this endeavor of enormous scope and scale.

Now, there are those who've expressed the opinion that we won't be able to do it, who say that this plan is too big to be implemented effectively and efficiently. And the fact is, there's a certain amount of skepticism, much of it justified, by what we're accustomed to seeing in Washington. So I understand these concerns, but I'm confident that we can do things differently and better.

As President, I expect to be judged—and should be judged—by the results of this program. That's why I refused to allow even a single dollar in this legislation to be spent on earmarks. And that's why we're going to put information about every dollar that's spent, including the money spent on projects like this one, on a new web site called recovery.gov, so that the American people can see where their money is going. And that's why I will appoint an oversight board that will be charged with monitoring my plans as part of an unprecedented effort to root out waste and inefficiency. And this board will be advised by experts—not just government experts, not just politicians, but citizens with years of expertise in management, economics, and accounting.

We're going to do more than has ever been done before to make certain that every tax dollar is spent wisely and on its intended purpose. So we're going to hold the Federal Government to new standards of accountability. And just as we demand new accountability for ourselves, we're going to demand this kind of accountability from the States and cities as well. And I know Tim Kaine and other Governors and mayors around the country would expect nothing less.

So much depends on what we do at this moment. It's not just about the future of my administration, it's about the future of our families and communities, our economy and our country. We are going to do this carefully and transparently and effectively as possible because so much is on the line. And that's what we've already begun to do, drafting this plan with a level of openness for which the American people have asked and which this situation demands.

So I, once again, thank Governor Kaine for welcoming me to the Commonwealth of Virginia once again. I want to thank him for his support of this plan that's so urgent for the people he represents and for the people that I've met throughout this great State and throughout the country.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:18 a.m. at a Fairfax County Parkway Connector site. In his remarks, he referred to James W. Owens, chairman and chief executive officer, Caterpillar, Inc.

Statement on Representative John D. Dingell, Jr.'s Years of Federal Service
February 11, 2009

It gives me great pleasure to commend Chairman John Dingell, the dean of the U.S. House of Representatives, who today becomes the longest serving Member in the history of the House. Since 1955, Chairman Dingell has represented the people of Michigan's 15th District with distinction.

Over the past 53 years, Chairman Dingell has been a champion for the health and well-being of hard-working Americans. Following in the footsteps of his father, the Honorable John Dingell, Sr., Chairman Dingell has introduced legislation to provide national health insurance for all Americans in each and every Congress. Seniors throughout America have Chairman Dingell to thank for his instrumental role in passage of the 1965 Medicare Act and for his innumerable efforts since then.

Through his hard work, Chairman Dingell reminds us that we have a solemn duty to protect our natural heritage for future generations. As a young Congressman, Chairman Dingell authored one of the first bills to protect America's wetlands and played a key role in the 1964 National Wilderness Act. Since then, he's sponsored legislation to improve water quality, protect endangered species, expand sources of renewable energy, and clean up toxic waste.

Chairman Dingell has long strived to ensure that every tax dollar is used wisely, and that we have a more open, honest, and accessible Government. In particular, his investigations into waste, fraud, and abuse have protected American consumers from inferior Government contracting, deceptive drug marketing, and insider trading.

On behalf of the American people, let me say, "Thank you, Chairman Dingell, for your decades of distinguished service on behalf of 15th District." As dean of the U.S. House, you are a model of tireless commitment for all of your colleagues. I look forward to working with you in the months and years to come as we endeavor to protect and improve the well-being of all Americans.

Statement on Congressional Passage of Economic Stabilization Legislation
February 11, 2009

I want to thank the Democrats and Republicans in Congress who came together around a hard-fought compromise that will save or create more than 3.5 million jobs and get our economy back on track. Just today, the CEO of Caterpillar said that if this American recovery and reinvestment plan is passed, his company would be able to rehire some of the employees they've been forced to lay off. It's also a plan that will provide immediate tax relief to families and businesses, while investing in priorities like health care, education, energy, and infrastructure that will grow our economy once more. I'm grateful to the House Democrats for starting this process, and for Members in the House and Senate for moving it along with the urgency that this moment demands.

NOTE: The statement referred to James W. Owens, chairman and chief executive officer, Caterpillar, Inc.