

Aug. 4 / Administration of Barack Obama, 2010

Because we know that real change does not come from Washington, it comes from the grassroots, from men and women in communities all across the country working together to make a difference.

In the end, that's what service is all about. It's not about the recognition or the awards—and it's obviously not about the money. [Laughter] To quote George Weiss, who's being honored here today: "We don't do it for the notoriety. We do it because we felt it has to be done." And that's why it is my hope that if this award serves a purpose, it will be to inspire more Americans to open their hearts, to strengthen their communities, and to follow the example of these amazing men and women who are here today.

So congratulations to all of the winners of the Citizens Medal. I've got some military aides here, and one of them is going to read the citations and I am going to get the medals to present to each of our honorees. With that, let's get started.

[At this point, Maj. Barrett M. Bernard, USA, Army Aide to the President, read the citations, and the President presented the medals.]

Well, you see why this is one of my favorite ceremonies? [Laughter] I want to thank all of

you for joining us to honor these remarkable people. None of them asked for this award. They didn't apply for it. Instead they were nominated by the men and women all across the country whose lives they have touched. And even though their names may not be well-known—at least not until today—[laughter]—they are heroes to those who need it the most.

And together, they remind us that we all have a purpose on this Earth that goes beyond our own lives and our own individual needs. And they teach us that no matter what challenges we face, we each have the power to make the world a better place. So congratulations to all of you. We are better as a country as a consequence of your ordinary—extraordinary service. And you exemplify what it means to be a citizen of the United States of America. We're grateful.

Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:26 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lisa Nigro, founder, Inspiration Corp.; Patrick A. Corvington, Chief Executive Officer, Corporation for National and Community Service; and George J. Weiss, Jr., founder, Fort Snelling National Cemetery Memorial Rifle Squad.

Statement on the Senate Cloture Vote on Federal Medical Assistance Percentage and Teacher Jobs Funding Legislation August 4, 2010

Today Congress took an important step towards ensuring that teachers across the country can stay in the classroom and cash-strapped States can get the relief they need.

We know that economic prosperity and educational success go hand in hand. That's why

I'm urging the Senate to pass this legislation that will prevent local budget cuts and save thousands of teacher jobs across the country.

I commend Senator Reid for his hard work and look forward to a final vote later this week.

Remarks at the Ford Motor Company Chicago Assembly Plant in Chicago, Illinois August 5, 2010

The President. Hello, Chicago! Hello, hello, hello! What's going on? Thank you, everybody.

And listen, it is good to see everybody. I appreciate everybody way back there. Hello, hello!

We—it is wonderful to be here. There are a couple of special guests I want to mention here before we get started. First of all, we got the Governor of the great State of Illinois, Pat Quinn. Give it up for Pat. Got one of the finest mayors in the country, Mayor Richard Daley is in the house. Our treasurer and soon-to-be United States Senator, Alexi Giannoulias, is here. A number of outstanding Members of Congress who've been very supportive of the auto industry: Congressman Jesse Jackson, Jr.; Congressman Bobby Rush; Congressman Danny Davis; Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky; Congressman Mike Quigley.

We've got Fred Hochberg of the—who's the chairman and President of the Export-Import Bank, which is going to help Ford sell all these outstanding cars overseas, not just here in the United States. And your own president, Mark Fields, is in the house. Give it up.

So it is good to be back in Chicago. It's good to see some friendly faces, be back in the old neighborhoods.

Audience members. Happy birthday!

The President. Thank you. I've gotten a little more gray hair since I was last down here. [*Laughter*] But it is wonderful to be back home.

Now, don't get me wrong, the White House is nice. And I've got a really short commute from my office to the house. I don't have to drive too far. And there's no greater honor than being your President. But let me tell you something: There's nothing like coming home, especially when your home is Chicago.

And I just had a chance to tour this extraordinary plant to see the great work that you're doing here. I notice that Mark and everybody, they put all the White Sox fans in front for me to meet. I didn't see a lot of Cubs guys on the line or Cardinals fans.

But this plant has a remarkable history. Henry Ford built it. Henry Ford built this plant in 1924 to manufacture the Model T. When the Great Depression struck and 25 Ford plants closed down, this one stayed open. When World War II was raging, this plant was churning out armored vehicles that helped make victory possible. In the 1990s, workers at this plant

built the best-selling car in America 5 years in a row.

So this plant is part of American history. For nearly nine decades, this plant has been the backbone of this community. There are workers here whose fathers worked on this line—I just met one while I was on my way over here—whose fathers' fathers worked on this line. This plant, like the entire industry, has been a source of deep pride for generations of American workers whose imaginations and hard work led to some of the finest cars that the world has ever known and whose sweat helped build up the middle class that lifted up the dreams of millions of people all across America.

This plant has stood through the good times, when American auto industry ruled the world, and in the not-so-good times, when the future of the auto industry was very much in doubt.

And let's face it: We've seen some of those not-so-good times in recent years. The year before I took office, this industry lost hundreds of thousands of jobs. Sales plunged 40 percent—40 percent. When the financial crisis hit and this great recession hit, that collided with an industry that for a long time had put off some hard choices, had put off adapting to changing times. And we had to face a hard, unimaginable reality, which was two of the Big Three automakers, GM and Chrysler, were on the brink of liquidation. If that had happened, more than 1 million jobs could have been lost, and that would have been a devastating blow to the entire economy.

Now, Ford was in better financial shape and was able to weather the storm without Federal assistance. That's a testament to the hard work you all do and the choices this company made. But I don't have to tell you—and your CEO will—has said this publicly—if your competitors had gone down, they would have taken down a whole bunch of the suppliers you depend on. The brand of American autos would have diminished. That would have had severe consequences for Ford. And that's the challenge we faced when I took office: an industry that was on the brink.

Now, there were a lot of folks who were ready to write off the American auto industry,

who thought we should just have walked away from you. Some still think that today. But you know what, that's not how you build a better future. That's not how you build a better America. We don't give up. The United States does not quit. We always compete. That's what we do. And that's what we're doing with the U.S. auto industry.

So I refused to walk away from this industry and American jobs. I put my faith in the American worker. I believe the American worker is the best worker in the world. And if we were willing to work hard together and rebuild and sacrifice in the short term, it would be a new beginning for a great American industry. If we could just get a sense of common purpose, we could once again see the best cars in the world designed, engineered, forged right here in Chicago, right here in the Midwest, right here in the United States of America.

So I tell you what. Last Friday, I stood with workers at a GM plant. I stood with workers at a Chrysler plant. Today I'm standing with workers at a Ford plant. I put my money on the American worker. I'd place my bets on the American worker any day of the week. And because of your efforts and the sacrifice that have been made across this industry over the past year, this industry is growing stronger. It's creating new jobs. It's manufacturing the fuel-efficient cars and trucks that will carry America towards an energy-independent future. Each and every one of you is proving the naysayers wrong.

All three automakers—all three U.S. automakers—are now operating at a profit. That's the first time it's happened in 6 years. America's automakers have added 55,000 jobs since last June. That's the best job growth in more than 10 years in this industry. Sales have rebounded. Automakers are keeping plants open through the usual summer shutdown to keep up with demand. Across the supply chain, plants that would not exist without the sacrifices made across industry are running at max or near-full capacity.

And this plant, right here, is shifting into higher gear. What I said last year was if American automakers were willing to make the tough choices necessary to make them more competi-

tive in the future, America would stand by them. And one thing we did was put in place a new national fuel efficiency standard for all new cars and trucks sold in America. This was good for consumers, it was good for the environment, and it finally gave our automakers the certainty they needed to plan for the future, a future where American workers build 21st-century cars that the world wants to buy.

So Ford dedicated itself to increasing fuel efficiency of more than a dozen of its models. And the Department of Energy awarded Ford a 2-year loan commitment to help make that happen. And Ford used that loan to retool this factory to build the next-generation Explorer. That's a model that will be up to 30 percent more fuel efficient.

Now, I should add, by the way, my most recent car was a Ford. I had one of those Ford Escapes, and that was a spiffy car. [Laughter] Now, I have to admit that I bought it about 2 months before I got Secret Service—[laughter]—and they wouldn't let me drive anymore. [Laughter] So it only had like 2,000 miles after 5 years, but I really enjoyed those 2,000 miles. [Laughter]

But I just got in that Explorer and that's an outstanding car. And over the next 2 months, this plant will bring on a second shift of 1,200 workers to build that Explorer, nearly doubling your workforce. That's not just good for this plant, that's good for the stamping plant in Chicago Heights; it's good for the suppliers, who are investing in new facilities and adding shifts and hiring more than 600 workers in Illinois and Indiana and Michigan; it's good for the entire community; it's good for the city; it's good for the State.

And Ford's also committed to selling more of the cars you build around the world, including the Explorer that you manufacture right here. We're going to sell it in up to 90 countries.

So today, to support those efforts, my administration is announcing a new \$250 million Export-Import Bank loan guarantee for Ford. And what this does is this helps Ford export—this will help Ford export more than 200,000 cars and trucks overseas, and that means more pro-

duction and more manufacturing jobs right here in the United States of America.

And it's going to help us reach the goal that I set in my State of the Union Address, which is, we are going to double America's exports of goods and services over the next 5 years. We're tired of just buying from everybody else; we want to start selling to other people, because we know we can compete.

That's how we're going to grow our economy. That's how we're going to support millions of good jobs for American workers to do what they've always done: build great products and sell them around the world. Our workers can compete with anybody, and America is going to compete aggressively for every job out there and every industry out there and every market out there.

So, Chicago, here's the bottom line: We've still got a long way to go. We've gone through a very, very difficult time. The auto industry has gone through a difficult time. And it's not back to where it needs to be. Our economy is not yet where it needs to be. It's going to take more time to heal from all the damage that was done. But we're beginning to see our efforts pay off. We are headed in the right direction. We are moving forward. The industry isn't just on the way back; it's on the way to being number one again. And I am convinced we're going to rebuild not only the auto industry but the economy better and stronger than before. And at its heart is going to be three powerful words: Made in America. Made in America.

And to all those naysayers in Washington, what we call the "just say no" crowd—[laughter]—who said that investing in you would guarantee failure, who said we should just walk away from this industry, who said that standing by America's automakers was, quote, "the worst investment you could make," who tried to block us at every turn, I wish they were standing here today and saw what I see. I wish they could see

the pride you take in building these great cars, American-made cars.

And my message to them is, don't bet against the American worker, don't lose faith in the American people, don't lose faith in American industry. We are coming back.

Just a few weeks before I visited that Chrysler plant—this is a true story—I went to a Chrysler plant. A few weeks before, 14 employees had won the lottery. And when they won, everybody thought they were just going to cash in and kick back and retire. Nobody would have blamed them for that. This is tough work.

But here's the thing: Most of them aren't retiring. And the worker who bought the winning ticket, what he did was he went out and bought for his wife one of the new cars that was being made in that plant, and then he went out and he bought American flags for his hometown, because he's proud of his country. And he keeps on showing up to work every single day, because he's proud of his job.

And that's the character of America: proud of your job, proud of your community, proud of your country, proud of the company you work for. That's what Ford is about. That's what you are about. That's what Chicago's about. That's what Illinois's about. That's what the United States of America's about. We are coming back.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Mark Fields, executive vice president and president of the Americas division, and Alan Mulally, president and chief executive officer, Ford Motor Company; and William Shanteau, a Chrysler Jefferson North Assembly Plant worker who purchased the winning June Powerball jackpot ticket in Curtice, OH, and his wife Lisa. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at a Fundraiser for Senatorial Candidate Alexi Giannoulias in Chicago

August 5, 2010

The President. Hello, everybody! Hello, Chicago! Thank you very much. Thank you. Everybody, have a seat. Have a seat, everybody.

It is good to be back home. It is good to be back home, and I am so proud to be standing here with the next Senator from the great State of Illinois, Alexi Giannoulias.

Now, we've got some other important personalities here, so I want to make sure to make mention, because they have been great friends for many years to me and to so many of you. Now, first of all, our outstanding Governor, Pat Quinn, is here. Where's Pat? There he is. One of America's greatest mayors, Richard M. Daley, is in the house. Secretary of State Jesse White is here; a great friend of mine, Comptroller Dan Hynes. Senate President John Cullerton is here. Where's John? Over there. He's also a funny guy. [Laughter] Speaker Mike Madigan is here. Where's the speaker? Congressman Danny Davis from the West Side; Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky from the North Side; and Congresswoman Debbie Halvorson from the South Side.

It is wonderful to be here, and it is wonderful to be with Alexi. Alexi is my friend. I know his character. I know how much he loves this country. I know how committed he is to public service for all the right reasons.

I appreciate his strong sense of advocacy for ordinary Americans. He's not doing this to help the lobbyists; he's not doing it to help special interests. Alexi is not one of these politicians who puts his finger to the wind and who changes who he is or where he stands to suit the political moment. You can trust him. You can count on him.

On his very first day in office, Alexi enacted the most sweeping ethics reforms of any Illinois State treasurer and ensured that contractors and banks couldn't "pay to play" for State business.

And he's not funding this campaign with Federal PAC or lobbyist money—not a dime—because he wants to make a strong statement about who he will be fighting for in the United

States Senate. And as State treasurer, Alexi has proven himself as someone who isn't afraid to stand up to special interests. He took on credit card companies and banned them from aggressively marketing on college campuses so that our kids don't graduate with credit card debt on top of tuition debt. He's reformed our State's college savings program so that it's now ranked one of the best in the country.

And I'm sure a lot of you have heard of what he did for Hartmarx. This is a clothing company that's employed people in this State for more than a century. And by the way, I'm a customer. [Laughter] And when they fell on hard times and a big bank threatened to pull their credit and destroy more than 600 jobs, Alexi stepped in, and he told the bank that if they did that, they would no longer be managing the money of Illinois taxpayers. And because of what he did, Alexi helped save that company and save those jobs. That's the kind of person you want in the United States Senate, somebody who's not going to forget where they came from, why they're in this, and who they're fighting for.

So we need fighters like Alexi in Washington because I don't know if you've noticed, but we've got a lot of work to do. [Laughter] The last few years have been incredibly challenging for the United States. Eighteen months ago, when I took office after nearly a decade of economic policies that gave us sluggish job growth, falling incomes, a record deficit—all culminating in the worst recession of our lifetimes, the worst recession since the Great Depression—that month that I was sworn in, in January of 2009, we lost 750,000 jobs, in that month alone. In total, we lost 8 million jobs during that recession.

Now, we didn't get to that point by accident. We got to that point after nearly 10 years of an economic agenda in Washington that was pretty straightforward. It basically said we're going to cut taxes for the wealthiest Americans, folks who don't need it and weren't even asking for it; we're going to cut rules for special interests; and