AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

needs to be strengthened in practical ways. And the Nation's rate of unemployment is now 6 percent—and significantly higher in some parts of America. We will not rest until every person in America who wants to work can find a job.

The new Congress that convenes next month will have a responsibility to address these challenges, and I will be making specific proposals to increase the momentum of economic recovery through a jobs and growth package.

The last Congress also left behind some unfinished business. The House and Senate passed different bills extending unemployment benefits. However, no final bill was sent to me extending unemployment benefits for about 750,000 Americans whose benefits will expire on December the 28th. These Americans rely on their unemployment benefits to pay for the mortgage or rent, food, and other critical bills. They need our assistance in these difficult times, and we cannot let them down.

I have shared these concerns with leaders of the House and the Senate, and they understand the need for early action. When our legislators return to the Capitol, I ask them to make the extension of unemployment benefits a first order of business. And the benefits they approve should be retroactive, so that people who lose their benefits this month will be paid in full. I've also directed the Department of Labor to work with the States to minimize any delay in helping these Americans once Congress has acted and extended these benefits.

I look forward to working with Members of both parties in the new Congress on our economic challenges. We must help our fellow citizens who have lost their jobs. And we must create an environment in which businesses, especially small businesses, can grow and generate the new jobs our country needs.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:02 a.m. on December 13 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 14. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 13 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Appointment of Thomas H. Kean as Chairman of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States

December 16, 2002

I am pleased to announce that Thomas H. Kean, former Governor of New Jersey and president of Drew University in New Jersey, will serve as Chairman of the national commission to investigate the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the events that led up to it.

Tom Kean is a leader respected for his integrity, fairness, and good judgment. I am confident he will work to make the Commission's investigation thorough. It is important that we uncover every detail and learn every lesson of September 11th.

Governor Kean served on the Advisory Board to the President's Initiative on Race from 1997 to 1998, served as Vice Chairman of the U.S. delegation to the Fourth U.N. World Conference on Women in 1995, and led the U.S. delegation to the World Conference on Education for All in Thailand in 1990.

Statement on the Resignation of Joe M. Allbaugh as Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency

December 16, 2002

For nearly 2 years as Director of FEMA, Joe Allbaugh has served America with ability, courage, and compassion. He will continue to shepherd FEMA through its transition into the Department of Homeland Security.

After the attacks on our country, America came to know Joe as I do: He is a steady leader, a calm presence, and man who inspires confidence in a time of crisis. I have trusted Joe in a variety of positions throughout my public life, and he has always met the highest standards of service and integrity. Laura and I wish Joe the very best in all that he does in the future.