

COMMITTEES:

ARMED SERVICES

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READINESS

SEAPOWERS AND EXPEDITIONARY FORCES

EDUCATION AND LABOR

SUBCOMMITTEES:
HIGHER EDUCATION

HEALTH, EMPLOYMENT, LABOR, AND PENSION



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The Honorable Barack Obama
President-Elect of the United States
Presidential Transition Headquarters
451 6th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20270

January 13, 2009

Dear President-Elect Obama,

Since this recession officially began over a year ago, the U.S. has lost over 3.6 million jobs, and today's unemployment rate has risen to 7.2 percent (a 16-year high). While the numbers are abysmal on their own, they do not fully explain what this crisis means for millions of families who are struggling to keep their jobs, stay in their homes, and meet the basic needs of their families. These numbers fail to account for those who are grossly under-employed – nearly 8 million part-time workers who said they cannot find full-time work. That figure is up dramatically from 4.6 million at the end of 2007.

In these extraordinary times, we need strong leadership and swift, smart, and decisive action to move America out of this economic crisis. A Congressional Budget Office analysis of the economy said that without a stimulus plan, the unemployment rate would rise above 9 percent by early 2010, home prices would continue to fall, and the loss of household wealth and consumer credit would slow the recovery.

As you work with the Congress to craft an important economic rescue package, I respectfully request that you strongly consider several principles that will create jobs, aid states and provide middle class tax relief. Specifically:

- Put people to work by **investing in our nation's aging infrastructure** - roads, bridges, highways, mass transit, wastewater and sewer systems, and deferred municipal priorities. We can also spur local jobs by supporting urgent maintenance, repair, environmental remediation and ready-to-go construction improvements to infrastructure at military facilities.
- While we want speedy investment in projects to create jobs and grow the economy, it is imperative that we do so with a process that is **accountable and ensures equitable distribution of the investment across municipalities**.

- **Invest in our nation's education system** so our children can stay competitive in the 21st century. A direct investment in public education provides relief to states and localities, ensures quality education programs continue, provides taxpayer relief and creates jobs. Title I Part A of NCLB has been funded at \$54.7 billion below its authorized level and more than 4million students are not getting the extra Title I help they were promised under the program. Increasing IDEA funding will help relieve the financial burden on already struggling local communities. An increase in Pell grants would provide a lifeline to millions of students struggling to find the resources to attend or continue their education. I believe we also have an opportunity to address our unmet school construction needs – K through university - by using green technology for long-term energy savings and job growth. This short-term stimulus in education will have long-term economic and benefits for generations.
- **Investing in alternative energy technologies** to reduce America's dependence on foreign oil to create long-term security and financial independence. I support the inclusion of a further extension of a research and development tax credit and a renewable energy production/investment tax credit.
- **Strengthening health care delivery** - The U.S. health care system ranks first in the world in cost, but towards the bottom in terms of delivery of care and outcomes. The rise in our nation's uninsured and underinsured have only exacerbated the problems into the system and created an additional burden for the welfare of our economy. Investment in health information technologies to modernize medical records will prevent medical errors and produce more efficiency in the system that will help reduce overall health care costs. Medicaid is one of the largest expenditures on a state's budget. As states, including Connecticut, scramble to make up for growing budget shortfalls, the federal government must infuse more money into their Medicaid payments to prevent citizens from loosing these vital health care services.
- **Responsible mortgage foreclosure relief in the courts.** The housing crisis is at the center of this economic crisis, and without addressing the foreclosures and excess inventory, the recession will continue. I strongly support the responsible approach of the Durbin-Conyers bill to allow homeowners at risk of foreclosure to alter the terms of their mortgages in bankruptcy court. This will help stop the declining value of real estate so middle class wealth and neighborhood stability will not continue to be damaged.
- **Provide tax relief for small businesses and working families.** I support extending bonus depreciation and expanding small business tax credits to allow for these businesses to create new jobs. Tax credits for individuals will help Americans have more cash in their pockets to spend for their needs.

The federal government must act swiftly to keep the recession from deepening further, but we have an even greater responsibility to make sure this package will do what it sets out to do. There also needs to be a heightened level of transparency and accountability, which was lacking in the TARP financial relief program from last year. As states are given the responsibility of choosing the infrastructure projects to fund, the federal government must require close accounting for why certain projects were supported, how funds are being used, and the success rate of the projects to achieve their overall goals.

To pull America out of this current crisis, we need swift immediate action that will get people back to work. I look forward to working with you on this critical measure, and on tackling the many challenges facing our great nation.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joe Courtney". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Joe Courtney
Member of Congress