

The President's Weekly Address

September 3, 2011

At the end of September, if Congress doesn't act, funding for our roads and bridges will expire. This would put a stop to highway construction, bridge repair, mass transit systems, and other important projects that keep our country moving quickly and safely. And it would affect thousands of construction workers and their families who depend on the jobs created by these projects to make ends meet.

Now, usually, renewing this transportation bill is a no-brainer. In fact, Congress has renewed it seven times over the last 2 years. But thanks to political posturing in Washington, they haven't been able to extend it this time, and the clock's running out.

Allowing this bill to expire would be a disaster for our infrastructure and our economy. Right away, over 4,000 workers would be furloughed without pay. If it's delayed for just 10 days, we will lose nearly \$1 billion in highway funding that we can never get back. And if we wait even longer, almost 1 million workers could be in danger of losing their jobs over the next year.

These are serious consequences, and the pain will be felt all across the country. In Virginia, 19,000 jobs are at risk; in Minnesota, more than 12,000; and in Florida, over 35,000 people could be out of work if Congress doesn't act.

That makes no sense, and it's completely avoidable. There's no reason to put more jobs at risk in an industry that has been one of the hardest hit in this recession. There's no reason to cut off funding for transportation projects at a time when so many of our roads are congested, so many of our bridges are in need of repair, and so many businesses are feeling the cost of delays.

This isn't a Democratic or a Republican issue, it's an American issue. That's why last week, I was joined at the White House by representatives from the AFL-CIO and the Chamber of Commerce, two groups who don't see eye to eye on much, but who agree that it's critically important for our economy that Congress act now.

That's also why 128 mayors from both parties wrote to Congress asking them to come together and pass a clean extension. These are local leaders who are on the ground every day and who know what would happen to their communities if Congress fails to act.

So I'm calling on Congress, as soon as they come back, to pass a clean extension of the transportation bill to keep workers on the job, keep critical projects moving forward, and to give folks a sense of security.

There's a lot of talk in Washington these days about creating jobs. But it doesn't help when those same folks turn around and risk losing hundreds of thousands of jobs just because of political gamesmanship. We need to pass this transportation bill and put people to work rebuilding America. We need to put our differences aside and do the right thing for our economy. And now is the time to act.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:30 p.m. on September 1 in the Blue Room, for broadcast on September 3. The transcript was made available by the Office of the

Press Secretary on September 2, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on September 3. In the address, the President referred to Richard L. Trumka, president, AFL–CIO; and David C. Chavern, executive vice president and chief operating officer, U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Weekly addresses.

Names: Chavern, David C.; Trumka, Richard L.

Subjects: Budget, Federal : Appropriations :: Transportation, Department of; Chamber of Commerce, U.S.; Congress : Bipartisanship; Economy, national : Economic concerns; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Job losses; Labor issues : Unions :: American Federation of Labor-Congress of International Organizations (AFL-CIO); Legislation, proposed : "Surface Transportation Extension Act of 2011"; Transportation : Highway system, modernization efforts; Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts; Transportation : Mass transit and rail infrastructure, improvement efforts; Transportation, Department of : Funding.

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