

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2017

Remarks at the North America's Building Trades Unions 2017 Legislative Conference

April 4, 2017

The President. Do I know these people well? You wouldn't believe it. [*Laughter*] I know them too well. I know them too well. They cost me a lot of money. [*Laughter*] I spent a lot of money, but I love them, and they're great, and their people are fantastic. And nobody does it like you people, right? Nobody. We talked about that—incredible. Incredible people.

So it's great to be back with America's builders. So did you ever think you'd see a President who knows how much concrete and rebar you can lay down in a single day? Believe me, I know. I know. We're a nation of builders, and it was about time we had a builder in the White House, right? We have a builder.

I want to thank Sean McGarvey and the entire governing board of presidents for honoring me with this great invitation. And I love that it's in Washington, because I don't have to travel—very fair. Worked out pretty well, I have to tell you. Five minutes.

Sean took part in one of our very first meetings at the White House—he mentioned it—and I promise you that America's labor leaders will always find an open door with Donald Trump. Always. Just look at the amazing talent assembled here. We have ironworkers, insulators—[*applause*—never changes, does it, with the ironworkers? [*Laughter*]

Well, let's hear it. Laborers! [*Applause*] Painters! [*Applause*] Fitters! [*Applause*] Plumbers! [*Applause*] Operators! [*Applause*] They're operators, all right, I'll tell you that. [*Laughter*] Electricians! [*Applause*] Not that good. Where's my Local 3? Oh, where's Local 3? That wasn't that good, electricians. Well, they became so rich, they don't have to—[*laughter*]. Let's do that again. Electricians! [*Applause*] Oh, that's better. Bricklayers! [*Applause*] Boilermakers! [*Applause*] Elevator constructors! [*Applause*] Good job. Sheet-metal workers! [*Applause*] Roofers! [*Applause*] Plasterers! [*Applause*] Plaster, well, yes, that's—we're not using as much plaster as we used to, fellas, right? [*Laughter*] No matter how you cut it. I'm sorry about that. I'm not sure I can do much—we brought back the coal miners. I'm not so sure about the plasterers. [*Laughter*] We'll do the best we can, okay? We're going to do the best we can. How about the cement masons! [*Applause*] And of course, our wonderful Teamsters. [*Applause*] Oh, that wasn't very good, James. [*Laughter*] Huh?

Audience member. Right here!

The President. But really, you're the backbone of America. With the talent in this room, we can build any city at any time, and we can build it better than anyone. But we're going to do even better than that. Together, we are going to rebuild our Nation.

You're the keepers of the great trades and traditions that built our country. From the New York skyline to the Golden Gate Bridge, you represent the workers whose hands, skills, and dreams will build the great landmarks of our future. Every day, your members live out what I call the American creed. They're on the job before dawn and after dusk, and they never quit until that job is done. And you know that. True. [*Applause*] True.

We saw this grit on display when the construction trades helped rebuild New York City after 9/11. That was a terrible time—we were all there—that was a terrible time in this

country's history. Worst attack in the history of our country. Worse than Pearl Harbor. Pearl Harbor, they were attacking military. Here they were attacking civilians. Worst attack. And I saw what happened. Within a very short period of time, we were back rebuilding, and rebuild you did. And I really congratulate—that took a lot of courage and a lot of strength. And thank you.

The fact is, you take pride in every part of your work, every joist, bolt, and rivet. You're not only builders, but you're artisans, very talented people—a lot of people don't understand, you're very talented people—enriching our cities and landscapes with works of great beauty. And just as you take pride in your work, our Nation takes great, great pride in you, believe me. And it's time that we give you the level playing field you deserve. *[Applause]* Thank you. Thank you, folks.

Washington and Wall Street have done very, very well for themselves. Now, it's your turn. And you're going to be also sharing the wealth. And you know, for many years, we've been taken advantage of by other countries. All over the world they took advantage of us. We had leaders that didn't have a clue or worse. That's not going to happen anymore, folks. That's not going to happen anymore. And you see what's going on right now. In fact, the trade deficit went way down—just announced before I got on stage. And I will tell you, we're going to have a whole different set of values when it comes to representing our country. That I can tell you right now.

This election was all about returning power to the people. I've spent my life working side-by-side with American builders, and now you have a builder as your President. One of my first acts as President was to stop one of the great sellouts of the American worker. I immediately withdrew the United States from the disaster—this would have been a disaster—this would have been another NAFTA, which, by the way, is a disaster. I took you out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership. *[Applause]* Thank you. That one wasn't even close. And you know it, and I know it—everybody knows it.

Next, I cleared the way for the construction of the Keystone XL and Dakota Access Pipelines. And it's looking like that's going to have about 42,000 jobs involved, those two jobs. That some number of great people. That's a big, big, beautiful—lot of people. And Sean, actually, and a whole group joined me in the Oval Office when we approved the Keystone permit.

And I joke—and I joked that day, I said, can you imagine the head of this big Canadian company, in this case, they build pipelines—and they failed. Didn't work. They paid millions and millions and hundreds of millions of dollars to consultants and lawyers, and they failed. And it was over. And then, one day Trump wins, and a few days later they get a knock on the door—sir, the Keystone pipeline was just approved.

Can you imagine? I want to see the expression on his face. And he's a nice guy. He actually—they came to the office. Because I did say you have to use American steel, you have to fabricate it here. Now, they had already bought 60, 70 percent of it. So you can't be too wild, right? But I was signing the order, and I said, "Where did they buy this steel?" I didn't like the answer. I said, "Who fabricated the steel?" I didn't like the answer. I said, "From now on, we're going to put a clause—got to be made in America." We want American steel, made in America. Right on the bottom. Hundred percent, fellas. Right?

And you'll be hearing more about this in the very near future. But as time goes by, let's say, over the next 7¾ years, meaning 8 years. *[Laughter]* We believe in two simple rules: Buy

American and hire American. That's what it's going to be. And that's not just a slogan, it's a promise. Believe me, that's a promise.

The era of economic surrender has come to an end. It's come to an end. We have surrendered, as a country, to outside interests. The era of economic victory for our country has just begun. You will see. No longer will we listen to those failed consultants who've made one wrong prediction after another, delivering nothing but soaring trade deficits and a big, fat, shrinking workforce.

For decades now, we've watched as our factories have shuttered—almost 70,000 factories—our jobs have been stolen, and blue collar wages have declined. We've seen the economic pain inflicted on our fellow Americans in Pittsburgh and Detroit and Baltimore. We didn't just offshore our jobs, we offshored a big, big part of the American Dream.

We enriched foreign countries at the expense of our own country, the great United States of America. But those days are over. I'm not—and I don't want to be—the President of the world. I'm the President of the United States. And from now on, it's going to be America first.

We're going to bring back our jobs, and yes, we're going to bring back the American Dream. As I traveled the Nation, I heard the pleas of the forgotten men and women of our country, the people who work hard and play by the rules, but who don't have a voice. Together, we are their voice, and they will never, ever be forgotten again. That I can tell you.

I don't know if you saw, but if you watch the Democrats now, the anger—the anger and hatred, and they're trying to figure out where did all these people come that voted for Donald Trump? Remember they said—because the electoral college is very, very hard, they say, almost impossible for a Republican to win. The odds are stacked. And they would say there's no way to 270—you need 270—there's no way to 270. Now, I heard that so much for a year. I kept saying, maybe I shouldn't be running. You know, Sean, I said, maybe I shouldn't run, because there's no way. The people are telling me—the same people that say all of the bad stuff, they're saying—there's no way to 270. Well—but there was a way to 306. *[Laughter]*

But wasn't that an exciting one? Places that nobody entered—Donald Trump has won the State of Michigan. They go, what? Donald Trump has won the State of Wisconsin. They came out of the blue, and we didn't even need them. And we love those two States—because we won the State of Pennsylvania, and we won Ohio and Iowa and North Carolina and South Carolina and Florida and so many others. We ran the coast. And if you don't run it, you can't win. Huge disadvantage, the electoral college. It's very, very tough. They say almost impossible for a Republican to win. But I had the support of, I would say, I would say almost everybody in this room.

We had tremendous—we had tremendous support. No, we did. We had tremendous support. We had tremendous support. And I'll tell you, we really had the support of the workers. We had tremendous support of the workers. What, would you like to make a change, folks? Would you like to make a change? Because if anybody wants to make a change, you won't be having so many jobs. That I can tell you. Your jobs will be—it will be a whole different story. Because in the last decade, you lost over 750 construction—think of this—750,000 construction jobs. Real wages in the construction sector have fallen more than 15 percent since the 1970s. We rank 39th in the world for construction permitting. And approvals for infrastructure projects can take up to 10 years.

Since taking office, I've signed one action after another to eliminate job-killing regulations that stand in the way. I had a chart—is that chart around here someplace? Did you have that? I have to show this chart to you, because it's amazing, actually. *[Laughter]*

[At this point, the President was handed a chart, which he then showed to the audience.]

This is—if you want to build a highway in the United States, these are some of the permits that you need. *[Laughter]* It's a process that can take way over 10 years. And it just never happens. Then, at the end of the period, they vote against it. And we're getting rid of many of these regulations. You have to go through 17 agencies, many permits in each agency.

In February alone, we added almost 60,000 new construction jobs in the country. I ordered expedited environmental reviews for infrastructure, environmental, and energy projects all across the country. No longer will you have to wait year after year for approvals that never come.

I also took historic action to lift the restrictions on American energy production and to put our miners, who have been treated horribly, back to work. Consumer confidence—*[applause]*—they're great people. Consumer confidence is at the highest level in more than a decade. You've seen all of the charts, all of the studies. The National Association of Manufacturers just the other day reported the most optimism in the entire history of its survey—which is a old survey—93 percent of manufacturers are optimistic about the future. That's almost 27 percent lower than that just a few months ago.

The Home Builders Confidence Index is at its highest level in 12 years. And now, in breaking news—it was just reported today—the monthly U.S. trade deficit declined by 10 percent, for a reason. Not by accident, believe me. It was for a reason.

We're also going to protect your jobs by protecting our borders. My administration is—just a matter of weeks, in literally, a short period of time—has brought record reductions to illegal immigration. Record reductions. Down 61 percent since Inauguration. General Kelly is doing a fantastic job. And we'll crack down on visa abuses that undermine the American worker. And we're doing that right now.

These, and so many other great achievements, have defined our first 10 weeks in office. We've done so much for the worker. Done so much for the military. We've done so much for the police officers, our men in blue and women in blue, who are not treated fairly. We're fighting for workers of all backgrounds and from all walks of life.

But to achieve true progress, we must remember our legacy. We're the Nation that built the tallest skyscrapers on what was once the Hudson River and put neon lights of Las Vegas in the middle of the desert. But if Government continues to punish America's builders, then we will not be that Nation any longer.

I'm calling on all Americans—Democrat, Republican, Independent—to come together and take part in the great rebuilding of our country.

That is why, in my address to Congress, I called on lawmakers to pass legislation that produces a \$1 trillion investment in the infrastructure of our country. And we need it. With your help, we can rebuild our country's bridges, airports, seaports, and water systems. We will streamline the process to get approvals quickly, so that long-delayed projects can finally move ahead. And with lower taxes on America's middle class and businesses, we will see a new surge of economic growth and development.

All of you have come to the Nation's Capital to call Members of the House and Senate to action. You've also called your President to action. When you see them, you can tell Congress that America's building trades and its President are very much united. [*Applause*] Thank you.

Together, we are ready to break new ground. We will build in the spirit of one of the great projects in our Nation's history, an enduring symbol of American strength. The Empire State Building was forged in the Great Depression and provided jobs for more than 3,000 workers. We've all seen the pictures: rugged workers perched dozens and dozens of stories up in the air. Workers like these moved almost 60,000 tons of steel, installed 200,000 cubic feet of stone, and laid 10 million bricks to build that American icon. And they did the job in a record time—13 months. Hard to believe. Think of that: the Empire State Building built in 13 months, during the Depression. Nowadays, you couldn't even get a building permit—[*laughter*]—or approval in that amount of time.

When the workers had secured the last piece of steel in that amazing and beautiful structure, they marked the moment—as we still do today—with what is called a "topping out" ceremony: 1,050 feet above the streets of New York City, they hoisted a beautiful and great American flag.

Audience member. The ironworkers!

The President. They did a good job. They did a good, those ironworkers, you'd better believe it.

It was an American flag that represented American projects, the big, bold, and daring dream of one man and then one city and, then finally, one people. That banner marked our Nation's proud climb to the top of the world. Our people endured through the hardships of Depression and the battles of World War II, and they emerged from these trials stronger and more united than ever before. Now, we must again summon that same national greatness to meet the challenges of our time.

Only miles from the halls of Congress and the newsrooms of Washington, you will find once-thriving cities marred by empty lots and once-booming industrial towns that have become rusted and are in total disrepair. Standing before me today, in this very hall, are the men and women who, if given the chance, can transform these communities. You are the citizens who can rebuild our cities, revive our industries, and renew our beloved country. And I know you will stop at nothing to get the job done.

For the rest of their lives, everyone who worked on the Empire State Building knew when they looked up at that great New York skyline that they had lifted the Stars and Stripes atop the tallest flagpole on Earth and that somewhere high above the city streets, their place in history was carved into beams of steel.

In the future, when we become—the trials—and we are—trials of our times—we too will emerge stronger and more united than ever before. It's happening, you watch. When we rise above the cynics and critics who live only to defend the status quo and to defend themselves from failure, then we, too, will construct a lasting monument to national greatness.

In this future, our Nation's workers and craftsmen will look way out at the vast open landscape, and they will build new bridges and new schools and new landmarks, and they will proudly raise up for all to see our bright and beautiful American flag. And when we see that flag, we will remember that we all share one American home, one American heart, and one American destiny.

May God bless our Nation's builders. May God bless our Nation's workers. And may God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:25 p.m. at the Washington Hilton hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Sean McGarvey, president, North America's Building Trades Unions; James P. Hoffa, general president, International Brotherhood of Teamsters; Russell K. Girling, president and chief executive officer, TransCanada; and Secretary of Homeland Security John F. Kelly.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : North America's Building Trades Unions, 2017 legislative conference.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Girling, Russell K.; Hoffa, James P.; Kelly, John F.; McGarvey, Sean.

Subjects: Business and industry : Construction industry :: Strengthening efforts; Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Strengthening efforts; Commerce, international : Free and fair trade; Defense and national security : Border security; Economy, national : Improvement; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Elections : 2016 Presidential and congressional elections; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Energy : Domestic production, promotion efforts; Energy : Oil and gas industry :: Dakota Access Pipeline project; Energy : Oil and gas industry :: Keystone XL Pipeline project; Energy : Oil and gas industry :: U.S.-based pipeline construction, domestic material and equipment requirements; Government organization and employees : Federal regulations, review; Homeland Security, Department of : Secretary; Immigration and naturalization : Illegal immigration; Labor issues : Unions :: Labor movement and organized labor; Labor issues : Unions :: North America's Building Trades Unions; Terrorism : September 11, 2001, attacks; TransCanada; Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP); Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts.

DCPD Number: DCPD201700228.