

I think about Ty'Sheoma Bethea, the young girl from that school I visited in Dillon, South Carolina, a place where the ceilings leak, the paint peels off the walls, and they have to stop teaching six times a day because the train barrels by their classroom. She had been told that her school is hopeless, but the other day after class she went to the public library and typed up a letter to the people sitting in this Chamber. She even asked her principal for the money to buy a stamp. The letter asks us for help and says: "We are just students trying to become lawyers, doctors, Congressmen like yourself, and one day President, so we can make a change to not just the State of South Carolina, but also the world. We are not quitters." That's what she said: "We are not quitters."

These words and these stories tell us something about the spirit of the people who sent us here. They tell us that even in the most trying times, amid the most difficult circumstances, there is a generosity, a resilience, a decency, and a determination that perseveres, a willingness to take responsibility for our future and for posterity. Their resolve must be our inspiration. Their concerns must be our cause. And we must show them and all our people that we are equal to the task before us.

I know—look, I know that we haven't agreed on every issue thus far. [*Laughter*] There are surely times in the future where we will part

ways. But I also know that every American who is sitting here tonight loves this country and wants it to succeed. I know that. That must be the starting point for every debate we have in the coming months and where we return after those debates are done. That is the foundation on which the American people expect us to build common ground.

And if we do, if we come together and lift this Nation from the depths of this crisis, if we put our people back to work and restart the engine of our prosperity, if we confront without fear the challenges of our time and summon that enduring spirit of an America that does not quit, then someday years from now our children can tell their children that this was the time when we performed, in the words that are carved into this very Chamber, "something worthy to be remembered."

Thank you. God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:16 p.m. in the House Chamber of the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Interior Department Inspector General Earl E. Devaney, Chair, Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board; and U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George J. Mitchell. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on the Nomination of Gary F. Locke To Be Secretary of Commerce February 25, 2009

President Obama. Good morning, everybody. Last night, I outlined my vision for our common future, one in which we accept the responsibility to act boldly and wisely to confront the extraordinary challenges of our times, put people back to work doing the work America needs done, and lay a new foundation for America's growth and prosperity.

Today I'm pleased to announce that I'm filling out my economic team with a man who shares that vision and who will play a key role in carrying it out as my Secretary of Commerce, Governor Gary Locke.

Now, I'm sure it's not lost on anyone that we've tried this a couple of times, but I'm a big

believer in keeping at something until you get it right. And Gary is the right man for this job.

Sometimes the American story can be told in the span of a single mile. More than 100 years ago, Gary's grandfather left China on a steamship bound for America. He had no family here. He spoke no English. He found work as a servant and purpose in a dream. He raised a son, Gary's father, who would go on to fight in World War II, return home and open a grocery store, and later raise a family of his own.

And Gary didn't learn English until he was five, but he earned the rank of Eagle Scout, worked his way through Yale University with the help of scholarships and student loans, and

got a law degree. He returned to Washington State and served as a prosecutor, a State representative, chief executive of one of the most populous counties in the United States, and finally, as Governor in the State capitol building not 1 mile from the home where his grandfather worked as a servant all those years ago.

So Gary knows the American Dream; he's lived it. And that's why he shares my commitment to do whatever it takes to keep it alive in our time.

Because somewhere in America, another small-business owner is hard at work on the next big idea and dreaming big dreams for his grandchild; a scientist is on the cusp of the next breakthrough discovery; an entrepreneur is sketching designs for the startup that will revolutionize an industry. Our economic crisis has put these plans at risk, but it has not dimmed the dreams that inspired them.

And that's why we've put a recovery plan into action that will save or create 3½ million jobs over the next 2 years. That's why the vast majority of these jobs, 90 percent, will be created in the private sector, because we know that business, not government, is the engine of growth in this country.

It is entrepreneurship and industry that are the wellsprings of an economy that has been the greatest force of progress and prosperity in human history. It is America's workers and businesses that employ them that will determine our economic destiny. It is the task of the Department of Commerce to help create conditions in which our workers can prosper, our businesses can thrive, and our economy can grow.

That's what Gary did in Washington State, convincing businesses to set up shop and create the jobs of the 21st century, jobs in science and technology, agriculture and energy, jobs that pay well and can't be shipped overseas.

That's what he did by establishing favorable markets abroad where Washington State's businesses could sell their products. That's what he did by unleashing powerful partnerships between State and local governments, between labor and business, all with an eye towards prosperity and progress for all those in his State who had dreams of their own.

So Gary will be a trusted voice in my Cabinet, a tireless advocate for our economic competitiveness, and an influential ambassador for American industry who will help us do everything we can—especially now—to promote our industry around the world. I'm grateful he's agreed to leave one Washington for another. I'm looking forward to having him on my team as we continue the work of turning our economy around and bringing about a stronger, more prosperous future for all Americans.

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to introduce to you an outstanding public servant, somebody I'm certain will be a great Secretary of Commerce, Gary Locke.

[At this point, Secretary-designate Locke made brief remarks.]

President Obama. Congratulations. You're going to be great.

Secretary-designate Locke. Thank you.

President Obama. All right, thank you everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:08 a.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to James Locke, father of Secretary-designate Locke. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary-designate Locke.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Economic Advisers February 25, 2009

Hello, everybody. This afternoon I met with members of my economic team and some key leaders in Congress to discuss the threats to our financial markets in this new century and

how we must transform our regulatory system to meet them.

In recent months, we've seen turmoil on Wall Street like we haven't seen in decades, as