

prevention that they need will bolster our ability to provide quality health care and reduce the cost of care that could have been avoided if we had thought about prevention in the first place. Thank you.

The President. Those are all great points.

Let me just close by saying this, because somebody asked for marching orders. Number one, all of the groups here need to stay involved. And I know you will. Number two, we will generate a report or a summary of the comments in the various breakout sessions that will be distributed to all the participants. Number three, I know that Nancy Pelosi, Harry Reid, Mitch McConnell, John Boehner, and the other leadership are interested in moving a process forward, and so unlike the fiscal responsibility summit where I think we have to have some discussion about mechanisms and how do we make it work so that it takes, I think here you've got a bunch of committees that are eager and ready and willing to get to work.

And so I just want to make sure that I don't get in the way of all of you moving aggressively and rapidly. I've got some very strong ideas, and the White House will be providing some guideposts and guidelines about what we think we can afford to do, how we think it's best to do it, but we don't have a monopoly on good ideas. And to the extent that this work is being done effectively in these various committees, then I assure you that we are going to do everything that we can to work with all of you, Democrat and Republican.

But the one thing that I've got to say here: There's been some talk about the notion that maybe we're taking on too much, right? That we're in the midst of an economic crisis and that the system is overloaded, and so we should put this off for another day. Well, let's just be clear. When times were good, we didn't get it

done. When we had mild recessions, we didn't get it done. When we were in peacetime, we did not get it done. When we were at war, we did not get it done.

There is always a reason not to do it. And it strikes me that now is exactly the time for us to deal with this problem. The American people are looking for solutions. Business is looking for solutions. And government—State, Federal, and local—needs solutions to this problem.

So for all of you who've been elected to office or those of you who are heading up major associations, I would just say, what better time than now, and what better cause for us to take up? Imagine the pride when we go back to our constituencies next year and say, you know what, we finally got something done on health care. That's something that's worth fighting for, and I hope all of you fight for it. Okay.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:08 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Scott P. Serota, president and chief executive officer, BlueCross BlueShield Association; Thomas J. Donahue, president and chief executive officer, U.S. Chamber of Commerce; Melody C. Barnes, Director, Domestic Policy Council; Richard Kirsch, national campaign manager, Health Care for America Now; former Rep. Newton L. Gingrich; Karen Ignagni, president and chief executive officer, America's Health Insurance Plans; Donald A. "Dan" Danner, president and chief executive officer, National Federation of Independent Business; Ted Epperly, president, American Academy of Family Physicians; Personal Aide to the President Reginald L. Love; and Lawrence A. McAndrews, president and chief executive officer, National Association of Children's Hospitals.

Remarks at a Columbus Police Academy Graduation Ceremony in Columbus, Ohio

March 6, 2009

Thank you very much. Please, everybody have a seat. Thank you so much. Well, what a wonderful reception. Thank you very much. I

want to begin by thanking Mayor Coleman, Director Brown, and the entire Columbus police force for inviting me to be a part of this

ceremony. It is a great honor and a privilege to stand with the men and women of this police academy's 114th graduating class. You have studied hard, you have trained tirelessly, and there is no longer any doubt that you will be employed as officers of the law when you leave here today.

I also want to just very quickly acknowledge one of the finest Governors in the country, who's been just dealing with all kinds of stuff and doing it with grace and aplomb and never breaks a sweat, but is working hard on behalf of his constituency, Ted Strickland; the Attorney General of the United States, Eric Holder.

I came out here with the—a number of members of the Ohio congressional delegation, but I want to make a special note of my former colleague when I was in the Senate, who is just as passionate about working people as anybody in the country, Sherrod Brown. Give Sherrod a big round of applause.

This city of Columbus needs the courage and the commitment of this graduating class to keep it safe, to make sure that people have the protection that they need. This economy needs your employment to keep it running. Just this morning we learned that we lost another 651,000 jobs throughout the country in the month of February alone, which brings the total number of jobs lost in this recession to an astounding 4.4 million.

Four point four million jobs, I don't need to tell the people of this State what statistics like this mean, because so many of you have been watching jobs disappear long before this recession hit. And I don't need to tell this graduating class what it's like to know that your job might be next, because up until a few weeks ago, that is precisely the future that this class faced, a future that millions of Americans still face right now. Well, that is not a future I accept for the United States of America. That is why I signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act into law.

Now there were those who argued that our recovery plan was unwise and unnecessary. They opposed the very notion that government has a role in ending the cycle of job loss at the heart of this recession. There are those who believe that all we can do is repeat the

very same policies that led us here in the first place.

But I also know that this country has never responded to a crisis by sitting on the sidelines and hoping for the best. I know that throughout our history, we have met every great challenge with bold action and big ideas. That's what's fueled a shared and lasting prosperity. And I know that at this defining moment for America we have a responsibility to ourselves and to our children to do it once again. We have a responsibility to act, and that's what I intend to do as President of the United States of America.

So for those who still doubt the wisdom of our recovery plan, I ask them to talk to the teachers who are still able to teach our children because we passed this plan. I ask them to talk to the nurses who are still able to care for our sick and the firefighters and first-responders who will still be able to keep our communities safe. I ask them to come to Ohio and meet the 25 men and women who will soon be protecting the streets of Columbus because we passed this plan. I look at these young men and women, I look into their eyes and I see their badges today and I know we did the right thing.

These jobs and the jobs of so many other police officers and teachers and firefighters all across Ohio will now be saved because of this recovery plan, a plan that will also create jobs in every corner of this State. Last week, we announced that Ohio would receive \$128 million that will put people to work renovating and rebuilding affordable housing. On Tuesday I announced that we'd be sending another \$935 million to Ohio that will create jobs rebuilding our roads, our bridges, and our highways. And yesterday Vice President Biden announced \$180 million for this State that will go towards expanding mass transit and buying fuel-efficient buses, money that will be putting people to work, getting people to work.

Altogether, this recovery plan will save and create over 3½ million American jobs over the next 2 years. Because of this plan, those who have lost their jobs in this recession will be able to receive extended unemployment benefits and continued health care coverage. Be-

cause of this plan, 95 percent of working Americans will receive a tax break that you will see in your paychecks starting on April 1st. And because of this plan, stories like the one we're celebrating here in Columbus will soon take place all across this Nation.

Today I'm pleased to announce that Attorney General Eric Holder and the Department of Justice are making available \$2 billion in Justice Assistance Grants from the recovery act. That's funding that will help communities throughout America keep their neighborhoods safer with more cops, more prosecutors, more probation officers, more radios and equipment, more help for crime victims, and more crime prevention programs for youth. Cities and States can apply for these funds right away, and as soon as those applications are received, the Justice Department will start getting the money out the door within 15 days.

In Savannah, Georgia, the police department would use this funding to hire more crime and intelligence analysts and put more cops on the beat protecting our schools. In Long Beach, California, it will be able to help fund 17,000 hours of overtime for law enforcement officials who are needed in high-crime areas. West Haven, Connecticut, will be able to restore crime prevention programs that were cut, even though they improved the quality of life in the city's most troubled neighborhoods. And the State of Iowa will be able to rehire drug enforcement officers and restart drug prevention programs that have been critical in fighting the crime and violence that plagues too many cities and too many towns.

So the list goes on and on. From Maine to San Francisco, from Colorado to New Jersey, these grants will put Americans to work doing the work necessary to keep America safe. They'll be directed only towards worthy programs that have been carefully planned and proven to work, and Vice President Biden and I will be holding every State and community accountable for the tax dollars they spend.

Now, by itself, this recovery plan won't turn our economy around or solve every problem. In the flight over here with the Ohio delegation, I talked to them about the fact that we've got big challenges ahead of us. We inherited a big

mess. This police force still faces budget challenges down the road, there are still workers in Columbus who are losing their jobs, and there is still so much work to be done throughout Ohio to lay a new foundation for growth and prosperity.

That's the work we must continue in the days and months ahead. That's why my administration is also moving quickly and aggressively to restart lending for families and businesses, to help responsible homeowners pay their mortgages and refinance their homes, to address the major economic challenges of our time: the cost of health care, our dependence on foreign oil, the state of our schools.

All of this takes time and it will take patience. It will entail great effort and cooperation. But most of all, it will require a renewed sense of responsibility from every American, a responsibility to ourselves and one another, a responsibility that's already been demonstrated by the men and women who are sitting behind me here today.

The job you signed up for is not easy. It can mean long shifts and late nights. It demands focus and determination and great bravery in the face of unknown dangers. When you run into that building or chase down that suspect, you will be risking your own life in order to protect the lives of men and women you have never met and some that you may never know.

But you knew all that when you joined the academy. You knew the risks involved, you knew the sacrifices required, and yet you stood up and said, "I'll take that risk. I'll make that sacrifice. I will do that job."

And that, Columbus, is the very essence of responsibility. That's the spirit we need in this country right now, no matter what our role is or what our profession that we've chosen. It's a spirit that asks us to look beyond our own individual ambitions to the wider obligations we have as the good citizens of a great nation, a spirit that calls on us to say, "I'll make that sacrifice. I'll do that job."

If we can summon that spirit once more, if we're willing to look out for one another and listen to one another, if we are willing to pull together and do our part, if we can show even a fraction of the courage and selflessness that

these cadets have already demonstrated, then I have no doubt that we will emerge from this crisis stronger than before and keep this Nation's dream alive for future generations.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

The President's Weekly Address

March 7, 2009

Yesterday we learned that the economy lost another 651,000 jobs in the month of February, which brings the total number of jobs lost in this recession to 4.4 million. The unemployment rate has now surpassed 8 percent, the highest rate in a quarter century. These aren't just statistics, but hardships experienced personally by millions of Americans who no longer know how they'll pay their bills or make their mortgage or raise their families.

From the day I took office, I knew that solving this crisis would not be easy, nor would it happen overnight. And we will continue to face difficult days in the months ahead. But I also believe that we will get through this; that if we act swiftly and boldly and responsibly, the United States of America will emerge stronger and more prosperous than it was before.

That's why my administration is committed to doing all that's necessary to address this crisis and lead us to a better day. That's why we're moving forward with an economic agenda that will jump-start job creation, restart lending, relieve responsible homeowners, and address the long-term economic challenges of our time: the cost of health care, our dependence on oil, and the state of our schools.

To prevent foreclosures for as many as 4 million homeowners and lower interest rates and lift home values for millions more, we are implementing a plan to allow lenders to work with borrowers to refinance or restructure their mortgages. On Wednesday, the Department of Treasury and Housing and Urban Development released the guidelines that lenders will use for lowering mortgage payments. This plan is now at work.

To restore the availability of affordable loans for families and businesses—not just

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:53 a.m. at the Aladdin Shrine Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Michael B. Coleman of Columbus, OH, who introduced the President; and Mitchell J. Brown, director, Department of Public Safety, Columbus, OH.

banks—we are taking steps to restart the flow of credit and stabilize the financial markets. On Thursday, the Treasury Department and the Federal Reserve launched the Consumer and Business Lending Initiative, a plan that will generate up to a trillion dollars of new lending so that families can finance a car or college education and small businesses can raise the capital that will create jobs.

And we've already begun to implement the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, a plan that will save and create over 3.5 million jobs over the next 2 years, jobs rebuilding our roads and bridges, constructing wind turbines and solar panels, expanding broadband and mass transit. And because of this plan, those who have lost their job in this recession will be able to receive extended unemployment benefits and continued health care coverage, while 95 percent of working Americans will receive a tax break beginning April 1st.

Of course, like every family going through hard times, our country must make tough choices. In order to pay for the things we need, we cannot waste money on the things we don't. My administration inherited a \$1.3 trillion budget deficit, the largest in history. And we've inherited a budgeting process as irresponsible as it is unsustainable. For years, as Wall Street used accounting tricks to conceal costs and avoid responsibility, Washington did too.

These kinds of irresponsible budgets and inexcusable practices are now in the past. For the first time in many years, my administration has produced a budget that represents an honest reckoning of where we are and where we need to go.

It's also a budget that begins to make the hard choices that we've avoided for far too