

the resources he needs to reward excellent, innovative schools. And so we think it's really important for the country that we get that bill passed.

But thank you so much, everybody. Appreciate you.

The First Lady. Thank you, guys. This was fun.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:33 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on Thomas A. Daschle's Decision To Withdraw His Name From Consideration To Be Secretary of Health and Human Services *February 3, 2009*

This morning Tom Daschle asked me to withdraw his nomination for Secretary of Health and Human Services. I accept his decision with sadness and regret.

Tom Daschle has devoted his life to public service and health care reform, so that every American has access to health care they can afford. I had hoped that he could bring this passion and expertise to bear to finally achieve that goal, which is so essential to the progress of our

economy and the well-being of businesses and families across our Nation.

Tom made a mistake, which he has openly acknowledged. He has not excused it, nor do I.

But that mistake, and this decision, cannot diminish the many contributions Tom has made to this country, from his years in the military to his decades of public service.

Now we must move forward with our plan to life this economy and put people back to work.

Remarks on the National Economy *February 4, 2009*

Thank you, Tim, for your hard work on this issue and on the economic recovery.

The economic crisis we face is unlike any we've seen in our lifetime. It's a crisis of falling confidence and rising debt, of widely distributed risk and narrowly concentrated reward, a crisis written in the fine print of subprime mortgages, on the ledger lines of once mighty financial institutions, and on the pink slips that have upended the lives of so many people across this country and cost the economy 2.6 million jobs last year alone.

We know that even if we do everything that we should, this crisis was years in the making, and it will take more than weeks or months to turn things around.

But make no mistake: A failure to act, and act now, will turn crisis into a catastrophe and guarantee a longer recession, a less robust recovery, and a more uncertain future. Millions more jobs will be lost. More businesses will be shuttered. More dreams will be deferred.

And that's why I feel such a sense of urgency about the economic recovery and reinvestment plan that is before Congress today. With it, we can save or create more than 3 million jobs, doing things that will strengthen our country for years to come. It's not merely a prescription for short-term spending, it's a strategy for long-term economic growth in areas like renewable energy and health care and education.

Now, in the past few days, I've heard criticisms that this plan is somehow wanting, and these criticisms echo the very same failed economic theories that led us into this crisis in the first place: the notion that tax cuts alone will solve all our problems; that we can ignore fundamental challenges like energy independence and the high cost of health care; that we can somehow deal with this in a piecemeal fashion and still expect our economy and our country to thrive.

I reject those theories, and so did the American people when they went to the polls in November and voted resoundingly for change. So I

urge Members of Congress to act without delay. No plan is perfect, and we should work to make it stronger. No one is more committed to making it stronger than me. But let's not make the perfect the enemy of the essential. Let's show people all over the country who are looking for leadership in this difficult time that we are equal to the task.

At the same time, we know that this recovery and reinvestment plan is only the first part of what we need to do to restore prosperity and secure our future. We also need a strong and viable financial system to keep credit flowing to businesses and families alike. And my administration will do whatever it takes to restore our financial system. Our recovery depends on it. And so in the next week, Secretary Geithner will release a new strategy to get credit moving again, a strategy that will reflect some of the lessons of past mistakes while laying the foundation of the future.

But in order to restore trust in our financial system, we're going to have to do more than just put forward our plans. In order to restore trust, we've got to make certain that taxpayer funds are not subsidizing excessive compensation packages on Wall Street.

We all need to take responsibility. And this includes executives at major financial firms who turned to the American people, hat in hand, when they were in trouble, even as they paid themselves customary, lavish bonuses. As I said last week, this is the height of irresponsibility; it's shameful. And that's exactly the kind of disregard of the costs and consequences of their actions that brought about this crisis: a culture of narrow self-interest and short-term gain at the expense of everything else.

This is America. We don't disparage wealth. We don't begrudge anybody for achieving success. And we certainly believe that success should be rewarded. But what gets people upset, and rightfully so, are executives being rewarded for failure, especially when those rewards are subsidized by U.S. taxpayers, many of whom are having a tough time themselves.

For top executives to award themselves these kinds of compensation packages in the midst of this economic crisis isn't just bad taste, it's bad strategy, and I will not tolerate it

as President. We're going to be demanding some restraint in exchange for Federal aid, so that when firms seek new Federal dollars, we won't find them up to the same old tricks.

As part of the reforms we're announcing today, top executives at firms receiving extraordinary help from U.S. taxpayers will have their compensation capped at \$500,000, a fraction of the salaries that have been reported recently. And if these executives receive any additional compensation, it will come in the form of stock that can't be paid up until taxpayers are paid back for their assistance.

Companies receiving Federal aid are going to have to disclose publicly all the perks and luxuries bestowed upon senior executives and provide an explanation to the taxpayers and to shareholders as to why these expenses are justified. And we're putting a stop to these kinds of massive severance packages we've all read about with disgust; we're taking the air out of golden parachutes.

We're asking these firms to take responsibility, to recognize the nature of this crisis and their role in it. We believe that what we've laid out should be viewed as fair and embraced as basic common sense.

And finally, these guidelines we're putting in place are only the beginning of a long-term effort. We're going to examine the ways in which the means and manner of executive compensation have contributed to a reckless culture and a quarter-by-quarter mentality that in turn helped to wreak havoc in our financial system. We're going to be taking a look at broader reforms so that executives are compensated for sound risk management and rewarded for growth measured over years, not just days or weeks.

We all have to pull together and take our share of responsibility. That's true here in Washington; that's true on Wall Street. The American people are carrying a huge burden as a result of this economic crisis, bearing the brunt of its effects as well as the cost of extraordinary measures we're taking to address them. The American people expect and demand that we pursue policies that reflect the reality of this crisis and that will prevent these

kinds of crises from occurring again in the future.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. in the Grand Foyer at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

Remarks on Signing the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 *February 4, 2009*

All right. Please, everybody have a seat. This is good; this is good. Today, with one of the first bills that I sign, reauthorizing the Children's Health Insurance Program, we fulfill one of the highest responsibilities that we have: to ensure the health and well-being of our Nation's children.

It's a responsibility that's only grown more urgent as our economic crisis deepens, as health care costs have exploded and millions of working families are unable to afford health insurance. Today in America, 8 million children are still uninsured, more than 45 million Americans altogether.

And it's hard to overstate the toll this takes on families: the sleepless nights worrying about somebody getting hurt, or praying that a sick child gets better on her own; the decisions that no parent should ever have to make: how long to put off that doctor's appointment, whether to fill that prescription, whether to let a child play outside, knowing that all it takes is one accident, one injury, to send your family into financial ruin.

The families joining us today know these realities firsthand. When Gregory Secrest from Martinsville, Virginia, lost his job back in August, his kids lost their health care. When he broke the news to his family, his 9-year-old son—where are you?—that's you? I thought so—[laughter]—handed over his piggy bank with \$4 in it and told his father, "Daddy, if you need it, you take it."

Now, this is not who we are. We're not a nation that leaves struggling families to fend for themselves, especially when they've done everything right. No child in America should be receiving his or her primary care in the emergency room in the middle of the night. No child should be falling behind at school because he

can't hear the teacher or see the blackboard. I refuse to accept that millions of our children fail to reach their full potential because we fail to meet their basic needs. In a decent society, there are certain obligations that are not subject to tradeoffs or negotiations, and health care for our children is one of those obligations.

That is why we have passed this legislation. These legislators have passed this legislation on a bipartisan basis to continue coverage for 7 million children, cover an additional 4 million children in need, and finally lift the ban on States providing insurance to legal immigrant children if they choose to do so.

Since it was created more than 10 years ago, the Children's Health Insurance Program has been a lifeline for millions of children whose parents work full time and don't qualify for Medicaid, but through no fault of their own, don't have and can't afford private insurance. For millions of children who fall into that gap, CHIP has provided care when they're sick and preventive services to help them stay well. This legislation will allow us to continue and build on these successes.

But, as I think everybody here will agree, this is only the first step. The way I see it, providing coverage to 11 million children through CHIP is a downpayment on my commitment to cover every single American. And it is just one component of a much broader effort to finally bring our health care system into the 21st century. And that's why the economic recovery and reinvestment plan that's now before Congress is so important.

Now, think about this, if Congress passes this recovery plan, in just 1 month, we will have done more to modernize our health care system than we've done in the past decade.