

Remarks on Energy Legislation *June 25, 2009*

Hey, guys. Good afternoon. Right now the House of Representatives is moving towards a vote of historic proportions on a piece of legislation that will open the door to a new clean energy economy.

For more than three decades, we've talked about our dependence on foreign oil. And for more than three decades, we've seen that dependence grow. We've seen our reliance on fossil fuels jeopardize our national security. We've seen it pollute the air we breathe and endanger our planet. And most of all, we've seen that other countries realize a critical truth: The nation that leads in the creation of a clean energy economy will be the nation that leads the 21st century global economy.

Now is the time for the United States of America to realize this as well. Now is the time for us to lead. The energy bill before the House will finally create a set of incentives that will spark a clean energy transformation of our economy. It will spur the development of low-carbon sources of energy, everything from wind, solar, and geothermal power to safe nuclear energy and cleaner coal. It will spur new energy savings like the efficient windows and other materials that reduce heating costs in the winter and cooling costs in the summer.

And most importantly, it will make possible the creation of millions of new jobs. Now make no mistake, this is a jobs bill. We're already seeing why this is true in the clean energy investments we're making through the Recovery Act. In California, 3,000 people will be employed to build a new solar plant that will create 1,000 jobs. In Michigan, investments in wind turbines and wind technology is expected to create over, 2,600 jobs. In Florida, three new solar projects are expected to employ 1,400 people. The list goes on and on, but the point is this: This legislation will finally make clean energy the profitable kind of energy. That will lead to the creation of new businesses and entire new industries. And that will lead to American jobs that pay well and can't be outsourced.

I've often talked about the need to build a new foundation for economic growth so that we

don't return to the endless cycle of bubble and bust that has led us into this deep recession. Clean energy and the jobs it creates will be absolutely critical to that new foundation.

This legislation has also been written carefully to address the concerns that many have expressed in the past. Instead of increasing the deficit, it's paid for by the polluters who currently emit dangerous carbon emissions. It provides assistance to businesses and families as they make the gradual transition to clean energy technologies. It gives rural communities and farmers the opportunity to participate in climate solutions and generate new income. And above all, it will protect consumers from the costs of this transition so that in a decade, the price to the average American will be about the same as a postage stamp per day.

Because this legislation is so balanced and sensible, it's already attracted a remarkable coalition of consumer and environmental groups, labor and business leaders, Democrats and Republicans. Now I urge every Member of Congress, Democrat and Republican, to come together to support this legislation. I can't stress enough the importance of this vote. I know this is going to be a close vote, in part because of the misinformation that's out there that suggests there's somehow a contradiction between investing in clean energy and our economic growth. But my call to those Members of Congress who are still on the fence, as well as to the American people, is this: We cannot be afraid of the future, and we can't be prisoners of the past. We've been talking about this issue for decades, and now is the time to finally act.

There's no disagreement over whether our dependence on foreign oil is endangering our security; we know it is. There's no longer a debate about whether carbon pollution is placing our planet in jeopardy; it's happening. And there's no longer a question about whether the jobs and the industries of the 21st century will be centered around clean, renewable energy. The only question is, which country will create these jobs and these industries? And I want that answer to be the United States of America, and

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I believe that the American people and the men and women they sent to Congress share that view.

So let's take this opportunity to come together and meet our obligations to our constitu-

ents, to our children, to God's creation, and to future generations. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Members of Congress

June 25, 2009

Hello, everybody. We have just finished what I consider to be a very productive meeting on one of the most critical issues that I think this Nation faces, and that is an immigration system that is broken and needs fixing.

We have Members of Congress from both Chambers and from both parties, who have participated in the meeting and shared a range of ideas. I think the consensus is that despite the—our inability to get this passed over the last several years, the American people still want to see a solution in which we are tightening up our borders or cracking down on employers who are using illegal workers in order to drive down wages and oftentimes mistreat those workers. And we need a effective way to recognize and legalize the status of undocumented workers who are here.

Now, this is—there is not by any means consensus across the table. As you can see, we've got a pretty diverse spectrum of folks here. But what I'm encouraged by is that after all the overheated rhetoric and the occasional demagoguery on all sides around this issue, we've got a responsible set of leaders sitting around the table who want to actively get something done and not put it off until a year, 2 years, 3 years, 5 years from now, but to start working on this thing right now.

My administration is fully behind an effort to achieve comprehensive immigration reform. I have asked my Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, Secretary Janet Napolitano, to lead up a group that is going to be working with a leadership group from both the House and the Senate to start systematically working through these issues from the congressional leaders and those with the relevant jurisdiction. What we've heard is through a process of regular order, they would

like to work through these issues both in the House and in the Senate.

In the meantime, administratively, there are a couple of things that our administration has already begun to do. The FBI has cleared much of the backlog of immigration background checks that was really holding up the legal immigration process. DHS is already in the process of cracking down on unscrupulous employers and, in collaboration with the Department of Labor, working to protect those workers from exploitation.

The Department of Homeland Security has also been making good progress in speeding up the processing of citizenship petitions, which has been far too slow for far too long. And that, by the way, is an area of great consensus, cuts across Democratic and Republican parties, the notion that we've got to make our legal system of immigration much more efficient and effective and customer-friendly than it currently is.

Today I'm pleased to announce a new collaboration between my Chief Information Officer, my Chief Performance Officer, my Chief Technologies Officer, and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Office to make the agency much more efficient, much more transparent, much more user-friendly than it has been in the past.

In the next 90 days, USCIS will launch a vastly improved web site that will, for the first time ever, allow applicants to get updates on their status of their applications via e-mail and text message and online. And anybody who's dealt with families who are trying to deal with, navigate the immigration system, this is going to save them huge amounts of time standing in line, waiting around, making phone calls, being put on hold. It's an example of some things that we can do administratively, even as we're