

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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**Remarks of President Barack Obama – As Prepared for Delivery
Video to AFL-CIO Executive Council
Miami, FL
March 3, 2009**

I'm sorry that I'm unable to join you this week, but it was a pleasure to see many of you at the White House recently, and I'm looking forward to having you all back often. I want to start by thanking President Sweeney, Secretary-Treasurer Trumka, and Vice President Holt Baker for their leadership. And I want to thank the Executive Council and all of you for your efforts as well as your advocacy these last several weeks. We have already started to change America on behalf of working people.

With your help, we passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan – the most sweeping economic recovery package in our history. I've always said that the gauge of our economic progress is clear: are we creating good jobs? Are we creating the kinds of jobs on which you can raise a family, own a home, afford college, save for retirement? That's why this plan is so important. It will create or save three and a half million jobs over the next two years – and it will do so by putting Americans to work doing the work that America needs done.

We'll modernize our health care system, rebuild crumbling roads, bridges, levees and transit systems, double our capacity to generate renewable energy, and build the classrooms that will help our children learn today – and compete tomorrow. And this plan includes the most progressive middle-class tax cuts in history; provides greater unemployment benefits for millions who have lost jobs; relieves overburdened cities and states struggling with budget shortfalls; and respects the work that Americans do right here at home while honoring our international obligations.

I've signed legislation helping to guarantee equal pay for equal work and expanding the Children's Health Insurance Program to millions more children. We've reversed the ban on project labor agreements and we've overturned the previous administration's Executive Orders which were designed not only to undermine critical government work – but to undermine organized labor.

I'm also pleased to have nominated Hilda Solis, a daughter of union members and a lifelong champion for working families, to be my Secretary of Labor – and that Vice President Joe Biden has agreed to lead my administration's Task Force on Middle Class Working Families. This Task Force will work hand in hand with my cabinet and White House agencies – as well as with all of you – to focus on growing and sustaining the middle class.

I want to repeat something that those of you who joined us for the Task Force announcement heard me say: I do not view the labor movement as part of the problem. To me, and to my administration, labor unions are a big part of the solution. We need to level the playing field for workers and the unions that represent their interests – because we cannot have a strong middle class without a strong labor movement.

The truth is, the road ahead will not be easy. The economic crisis we face is vast and the challenges we confront are many; you know this because your members have already had to make sacrifices. But I have every confidence that if we are willing to do the difficult work that must be done, we will emerge from these trials stronger and more prosperous than we were before. And as we confront this crisis and work to provide health care to every American, rebuild our nation's infrastructure, move toward a clean energy economy, and pass the Employee Free Choice Act, I want you to know that you will always have a seat at the table.

Thank you for everything you do.