

**Statement of Terence M. O'Sullivan,
General President, Laborers' International Union of North America,
Senate Democratic Policy Committee Press Conference on Economic Recovery
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I'm Terence O'Sullivan, General President of LIUNA, the Laborers' International Union of North America. LIUNA represents the men and women who build America.

I want to thank Senator Menendez, Senator Schumer and the Democratic Policy Committee for the opportunity to be here today and for everything they do on behalf of working Americans.

All working people across our country are suffering from the economic crisis.

More Americans lost their jobs last year than in any year since 1945 and those in the construction industry have been particularly hard hit. The construction industry is an important driver of our economy but in the industry, unemployment now stands at 15.3 percent, the highest in 16 years.

There are 1.4 million working men and women in the construction industry out of work. In December alone, 101,000 construction jobs were lost. These are good jobs with good pay and benefits that we are losing. Our families, communities and nation cannot afford to keep losing them and expect the economy to improve.

Creating jobs building America -- our roads and bridges, our transit systems, energy systems and our schoolhouses -- can help get our economy back on track and we can begin quickly.

According to the U.S. Conference of Mayors, there are 15,221 badly needed, ready-to-go public construction projects that could create more than 1 million jobs within two years. Hundreds of thousands of those jobs could get off the ground within months.

Construction workers are among those most hurt by the current crisis. They are not asking for a bailout. They are not asking for a handout. And they are not asking for a stimulus check. They are looking for a paycheck and getting paychecks back in their hands will circulate money quickly throughout communities across our country and leave behind tangible assets for future generations.

Even without the economic crisis, the need to build America is real:

- 26 percent of our bridges are in need of replacement or repair.
- A third of our roads are in less than good condition, resulting in wasted gas and wasted time.

- Our children are crammed into 220,000 temporary classrooms because of inadequate schoolhouses.
- We have 3,650 unsafe dams and levees.
- Broken sewer pipes across the country result in billions of gallons of raw sewage being dumped into our waterways.

Without adequate investment our country will fall behind in the global economy. Developing nations such as China and India invest 8 percent or more of their gross domestic product in infrastructure, compared with 2 percent in the U.S. While our highways and bridges deteriorate, those nations are building state-of-the art highways and transportation systems.

This is a no-brainer: we can build America, investing in the fundamentals of our country and quickly create good jobs that will help get our economy moving again. There is work to do in America and Americans desperately need work. All that's missing are the jobs.

LIUNA and the half-million men and women we represent and millions like them who want to go to work building America every day, urge quick passage of an economic recovery program that focuses on building America so that America works, again.

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The members of LIUNA – the Laborers' International Union of North America – are on the forefront of the construction industry, a powerhouse of workers who are proud to build America.

To learn more about LIUNA's Build America, so America Works - a long-term effort to make taking care of America's basics a national priority - go to www.LiunaBuildsAmerica.org.