

**Statement of Terry O'Sullivan,
General President of LIUNA,
On the President's State of the Union Remarks
January 21, 2015**

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The half-million working men and women of LIUNA applaud the President's State of the Union remarks calling on lawmakers to address income equality, particularly by speaking out for laws that strengthen unions and give workers a voice. And the President clearly recognized the value unions add to our economy by inviting one of our own – LIUNA Local 300 member LeDaya Epps – to be Michelle Obama's guest in order to highlight the training and apprenticeship programs of LIUNA and other construction trades unions.

But we also note that one of the best ways to address income inequality is with the good, family-supporting jobs that a long-term Highway Bill and energy projects such as the Keystone XL Pipeline will create.

Numerous experts and members of both parties in Congress agree that a modest and relatively painless increase in the federal gas tax – which has not been adjusted for more than two decades – would help to address the crisis of our increasingly unsafe transportation system. Yet the President once again avoided the issue of how to fund a long-term, robust Highway Bill and offered proposals which at best could only supplement transportation infrastructure needs. Likewise, the booming energy sector is creating hundreds of thousands of good middle-class jobs, and yet the President disregarded the value of the jobs that would be created by approving the Keystone XL Pipeline. Nor did he acknowledge the massive growth in the natural gas sector, which is creating family-supporting work and promises affordable energy for millions of Americans and businesses.

As the President noted, statistics show our economy is finally on the mend, but for the majority of working people wages are stagnant or they're having to work two or three jobs to equal the one they used to have. We hope the President and Congress will consider the obvious solutions of investing in our transportation infrastructure and unlocking jobs in the energy sector.

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The half-million 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.