

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

Remarks Following a Meeting on Economic Stabilization Legislation and an Exchange With Reporters

February 2, 2009

Governor Jim Douglas of Vermont. Well, Mr. President, thank you for your time today. Thank you for your leadership on matters of great importance to the American people. You were gracious in reaching out to the Governors of our country in December before you took office. We had an opportunity at that time to discuss the economic crisis, the fiscal crisis that's confronting most of our States. And we indicated that we needed some assistance from the Federal Government to stimulate the economy, to create jobs, to help us balance our budgets and preserve essential programs for the American people and avoid the need to raise taxes at the State level.

The House of Representatives has passed a bill, and we look forward to working with your administration, with the Senators and Members of the House to fashion a piece of legislation that fulfills the goals that we have articulated.

I know there are some differences of opinion on some of the elements. And if I were writing it, it might be a little different. If you were writing it, it might be a little different. But the essence of a recovery package is essential to get our Nation's economy moving.

And it's not just a matter of the bigger picture or numbers, it's really quite personal, in many cases. On my floor alone in the office building where I work, four relatives of employees have lost their jobs over the last couple of weeks. So this is a serious matter. It's the kind of recession that is deep, that appears to be long, and the only way we're going to get the country moving again is a partnership between the States and the Federal Government.

So we appreciate your hard work and look forward to coming to some conclusion in the very near future so we can get America moving again.

The President. Well, I want to thank Governor Douglas for being here. We met early on during the transition period with all of the Governors from across the country, and with very few exceptions, I heard from Republicans and Democrats the need for action—and swift action—and that's what we've been trying to do in moving this package forward.

And nobody understands this better than Governors and mayors and county officials who are seeing the devastating effects on the ground of this contraction in the economy. People are being laid off, and that means that Governors like Jim are having to not only deal with declining revenue, but increased social services to provide support for people who are unemployed as they're seeking work.

And the recovery package that we are moving forward is designed to provide States relief, to make sure that people who are laid off from their jobs are still able to get unemployment insurance, are still able to get health care, and that we are putting in place the infrastructure of rebuilding roads, bridges, waterways, other projects at the State levels that allow us to put people back to work. And we want to create or save 3 million jobs, and we want to put the investments in place that are going to ensure long-term economic growth.

So, as Jim indicated, there are still some differences between Democrats and Republicans on the Hill, between the White House and some of the products that's been discussed on the Hill. But what we can't do is let very modest differences get in the way of the overall package moving forward swiftly.

And so I'm very gratified that Governor Douglas, along with many Governors from across the country, are going to be weighing in, in these critical next few days. And we hope to be able to get a bill to you in the next couple of weeks so we can put America back to work and start digging ourselves out of this deep hole that we're in.

So thank you so much for taking the time to be here.

Gov. Douglas. Well, thank you, Mr. President.

The President. All right. Good. Thank you, guys.

Health and Human Services Secretary-Designate Thomas A. Daschle

Q. Mr. President, do you stand behind Tom Daschle? Do you still stand behind Tom Daschle?

The President. Thank you. Absolutely. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:05 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Economic stabilization legislation, meeting; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House.

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