

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010

Remarks on Signing the United States Manufacturing Enhancement Act of 2010

August 11, 2010

Thank you. Thank you very much. Everybody, please have a seat. Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to the White House.

From the day I took office, my administration's highest priority has been to rescue our economy from crisis, rebuild it on a new foundation for lasting growth, and do everything we can, every single day, to help the American people whose lives have been upended by a brutal recession.

Now, we knew from the beginning that reversing the damage done by the worst financial crisis and the deepest recession in generations would take some time, more time than anyone would like. And we knew that it would require an ongoing effort across all fronts.

Now, the challenges we face have been confirmed not just by the economic data that we've seen since last spring, when events in Europe roiled the markets and created headwinds for our economic recovery. They're also confirmed every day in the conversations that I have with folks around the country and in the letters that I read at night, stories of Americans who are still looking for work and the men and women who are still struggling to grow their businesses and hire in these challenging times.

So while we have fought back from the worst of this recession, we've still got a lot of work to do. We've still got a long way to go. And I'm more determined than ever to do every single thing we can to hasten our economic recovery and get our people back to work. So that's why I'm pleased today to sign into law a bill that will strengthen American manufacturing and American jobs. And as I do, I'm joined by two members of my economic team, Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke, who's been a tireless advocate for America's manufacturers, and Ambassador Ron Kirk, who's been doing a great job and putting in a lot of miles as our U.S. Trade Representative.

A few areas of our economy have been as hard hit as manufacturing, not just in recent years, but in recent decades. Throughout the 20th century, manufacturing was the ticket to a better life for generations of American workers. It was the furnace that forged our middle class. But over time, the jobs dried up. Companies learned to do more with less and outsourced whatever they could. Other nations didn't always live up to trade agreements and we didn't always enforce them. And over the last decade, the manufacturing workforce shrank by 33 percent, leaving millions of skilled, hard-working Americans sitting as idle as the plants that they once worked in. This was before the recent recession left them and millions more struggling in ways they never imagined.

Now, some suggest this decline is inevitable, that the only way for America to get ahead is to leave manufacturing communities and their workers behind. I do not see it that way. The answer isn't to stop building things, to stop making things; the answer is to build things better, make things better, right here in the United States. We will rebuild this economy stronger than before, and at its heart will be three powerful words: "Made in America."

For too long, we've been buying too much from the rest of the world, when we should be selling more to the rest of the world. That's why in my State of the Union Address, I set an

ambitious goal for this country. Over the next 5 years, we are going to double our exports of goods and services, an increase that will grow our economy and support millions of American jobs. We've got a lot of work to do to reach this goal. Our economy has fallen into the habit of buying from overseas and not selling the way it needs to. But it is vitally important that we reverse that trend. After all, 95 percent of the world's customers and the world's fastest growing markets are beyond our borders. And when the playing field is even, American workers can compete with anybody. And we're going to compete aggressively for every job, for every industry, and every market out there.

That's why we fought for and passed tax breaks for companies that are investing here in the United States rather than companies that are keeping profits offshore. That's why we closed loopholes that encourage corporations to ship American jobs overseas. That's why we're enforcing our trade laws, in some cases, for the very first time. That's why we told America's automakers that if they made the tough decisions required to compete in the future, that America would stand by them. And that's why we're investing in a clean energy industry and the jobs that come with it, jobs that pay well and carry America to a cleaner, more secure, and more energy-independent future.

Now, already we're beginning to see some of these investments pay off. I've seen it myself in factories where American workers are now manufacturing wind turbines and solar panels, components for the advanced batteries of tomorrow.

I've seen it in retooled auto plants where American workers are building high-quality, fuel-efficient cars and trucks that can go toe to toe with any in the world. In fact, for the first time in more than 5 years, the Big Three are operating at a profit. And the auto industry has added 76,000 jobs since last June. That's the strongest period of job growth in more than 10 years.

So overall, the manufacturing sector has actually added 183,000 jobs so far this year. That's the strongest 7 months of manufacturing job growth in more than a decade. Instead of plants leaving America to set up shop overseas, we've actually begun to see the opposite: a growing number of firms setting up shop and hiring here at home.

So we're not yet where we need to be, but there are some good trends out there. And we can't let up. We've got to keep moving forward. And that's why today I'm signing a bill into law that will make it cheaper and easier for American manufacturers and American workers to do what they do best: build great products and sell them around the world.

The Manufacturing Enhancement Act of 2010 will create jobs, help American companies compete, and strengthen manufacturing as a key driver of our economic recovery. And here's how it works. To make their products, manufacturers—some of whom are represented here today—often have to import certain materials from other countries and pay tariffs on those materials. This legislation will reduce or eliminate some of those tariffs, which will significantly lower costs for American companies across the manufacturing landscape, from cars to chemicals, medical devices to sporting goods. And that will boost output, support good jobs here at home, and lower prices for American consumers.

This bill passed both Houses of Congress on an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis, and I want to thank Democrats and Republicans for coming together on behalf of America's businesses and workers. And before I sign it into law, I want to take this opportunity to encourage that same kind of bipartisan spirit on another step that will create jobs and move America forward.

The extraordinary growth we've seen in the clean energy sector is due first and foremost to the entrepreneurial drive of our businesses and our workers. But it's also due to the fact that we invested in them. One of these investments came in the form of clean energy manufacturing tax credits. What we said to clean energy firms was, if you're willing to put up 70 percent of the capital for a worthy endeavor, we'll put up the other 30 percent. That means that for every dollar we invest, we leverage more than two private sector dollars.

The only problem we have is these credits worked so well, there weren't enough to go around. More than 180 clean energy projects in over 40 States received \$2.3 billion in tax credits, but the program was such a success that we received 500 qualified applications for \$8 billion in tax credits.

So I believe that if an American company wants to innovate, grow, and create jobs right here in the United States, we should give them the support they need to do it. That's why I'm urging Congress, once again, to invest \$5 billion in these clean energy manufacturing tax credits. It's an investment that will generate \$12 billion or more in private sector investment and tens of thousands of new jobs.

And as I've said before, the nation that wins the race for the clean energy economy will lead the 21st-century economy. Other nations know this. They've been investing heavily in that future. They want those jobs. But the United States of America doesn't play for second place. We compete to win. And we will win this if we move forward free of politics and are focused on just what it takes to get the job done.

This is an idea that already has bipartisan support, but it's been delayed for months. So my simple message is, don't let politics get in the way of doing what's right for our economy and for our future, and don't bet against the American worker or lose faith in American industry. This is a nation that has always been proud of what it builds, and it is that spirit that's going to lead our recovery forward.

We've been through tough times before, and it is precisely in those times that we rebuilt, we retooled, we recaptured the ingenuity and resilience that makes this Nation so great. That's how our predecessors built the first American century. That's how we'll build the next. And it's in that spirit that I will now sign this bill into law. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:07 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. H.R. 4380, approved August 11, was assigned Public Law No. 111-227.

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Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Job losses; Employment and unemployment : Outsourcing to foreign countries; Energy : Alternative energy products and technologies, U.S. production; Energy : Battery technology for hybrid automobiles; Energy : Clean energy manufacturing tax credit, proposed extension; Energy : Solar and wind energy; Legislation, enacted : United States Manufacturing Enhancement Act of 2010; Trade Representative, Office of the U.S. : U.S. Trade Representative.

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