

## Statement on the Death of Representative Donald M. Payne

March 6, 2012

Michelle and I were saddened to hear about the passing of Congressman Donald Payne, chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation and former chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus. By any standard, Don lived a full and meaningful life. After serving as the first African American president of the national council of YMCAs and then several years in local government, Don went on to become the first African American Congressman to represent the State of New

Jersey. In Washington, he made it his mission to fight for working families, increase the minimum wage, ensure worker safety, guarantee affordable health care, and improve the educational system. He was a leader in U.S.-Africa policy, making enormous contributions towards helping restore democracy and human rights across the continent. Don will be missed, and our thoughts and prayers go out to his family and friends during this difficult time.

## Remarks to the Business Roundtable

March 6, 2012

Thank you very much, everybody. It is good to see all of you. Jim, thank you for the introduction. It is a privilege to be with the men and women of the Business Roundtable. Over the past 3 years, we've worked together on a number of issues, and we've found common ground on an awful lot of them.

Some of you have dedicated your time and energy and expertise to serving on my Jobs Council or my Export Council. Others have hosted me or Cabinet members at your companies, at your plants, at your distribution centers. And this engagement has been incredibly productive for us. It's helped to shape our collective work and to get this economy growing again. So I just wanted to say thank you for that.

Tonight I want to keep that engagement going, so I'm going to keep my remarks at the top relatively brief. I'm looking forward to hearing about your new "Taking Action for America" report. And I'm going to, hopefully, spend as much time listening as I do talking.

But the last time I addressed this group was just over 2 years ago, when we were still working to clear away the wreckage from what turned out to be the worst economic crisis that we've seen since the Great Depression. And obviously, we've got a long way to go. We've still got millions of people who are out of work.

We still have a lot of folks whose homes are underwater. There are enormous economic challenges that lie ahead, and we're going to have to think strategically and systematically about how we restore a sense of middle class security for Americans who are doing the right thing, working hard, looking to support their families.

The good news is, over the last 2 years, businesses like yours have created over 3.7 million new jobs. The American auto industry has come back. Companies are bringing jobs back to America. Manufacturers are adding new jobs for the first time since the 1990s.

And I've seen it firsthand in many of your companies. Most recently, I went to the Boeing plant out in Washington State. And Jim informed me that last year, orders for commercial aircraft rose by more than 50 percent, and they had to hire 13,000 workers all across America just to keep up. And I have to say that given the number of planes that I've been selling around the world, I expect a golden watch upon my retirement. *[Laughter]*

So the economy is getting stronger, and the recovery is speeding up. And the question now is, how do we make sure that it keeps going?

I've been talking a lot recently about how we can do that: how we can help companies like yours hire more workers, bring more jobs back to America; how we can leave an economy