

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

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REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
ON TEACHER JOBS

Rose Garden

11:43 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning, everybody. One of the biggest challenges of this recession has been its impact on state and local communities. With so many Americans unemployed or struggling to get by, states have been forced to balance their budgets with fewer tax dollars, which means that they've got to cut critical services and lay off teachers and police officers and firefighters.

It's one thing for states to get their fiscal houses in order and tighten their belts like families across America -- because families have been doing it, there's no reason that states can't do it, too. That's a welcome thing. But we can't stand by and do nothing while pink slips are given to the men and women who educate our children or keep our communities safe. That doesn't make sense. And that's why a significant part of the economic plan that we passed last year provided relief for struggling states -- relief that has already prevented hundreds of thousands of layoffs.

And that's why today we're trying to pass a law that will save hundreds of thousands of additional jobs in the coming year. It will help states avoid laying off police officers, firefighters, nurses and first responders. And it will save the jobs of teachers like the ones who are standing with me today. If we do nothing, these educators won't be returning to the classroom this fall. And that won't just deprive them of a paycheck, it will deprive the children

and parents who are counting on them to provide a decent education. It means that students in Illinois and West Virginia who count on Rachel and Shannon are going to be not getting the education that they deserve. It will deprive countless cities and towns of the law enforcement officials and first responders who risk their lives to keep us out of harm's way. It will cost us jobs at a time when we need to be creating jobs. In other words, it will take us backwards at a time when we need to keep this country moving forward.

Now, this proposal is fully paid for, in part by closing tax loopholes that encourage corporations to ship American jobs overseas. So it will not add to our deficit. And the money will only go toward saving the jobs of teachers and other essential professionals.

It should not be a partisan issue. I heard the Republican Leader in the House say the other day that this is a special interest bill. And I suppose if America's children and the safety of our communities are your special interests, then it is a special interest bill. But I think those interests are widely shared throughout this country -- a challenge that affects parents, children and citizens in almost every community in America should not be a Democratic problem or a Republican problem. It is an American problem.

I'm grateful that two Republicans joined Democrats to pass this proposal in the Senate last week. And I'm equally grateful that Speaker Pelosi has called back the House of Representatives to a special session so that they can vote as well.

I urge members of both parties to come together and get this done so that I can sign this bill into law. I urge Congress to pass this proposal so that the outstanding teachers who are here today can go back to educating our children. America is watching and America is waiting for Washington to act. So let's show the nation that we can.

I want to thank Rachel as well as Shannon not only for being here today, but for the extraordinary work that they're doing each and every day with special education children, with kindergarteners so they're getting off to a right start. And I also want to thank Arne Duncan, who has been doing as much as anybody all across the country to try to emphasize how important it is to make sure that we are providing a first-class education to every single one of our children.

This bill helps us do that. And so it's time for Democrats and Republicans to come together and get it done.

Thank you very much, everybody.

END 11:48 A.M. EDT