

I rise in support of H.R. 2847, the Jobs for Main Street Act. This legislation would provide jobs for tens of thousands of Americans, preserve thousands more jobs, and continue essential benefits to aid the unemployed without increasing the national debt.

We have taken important steps to bring our economy back from the worst economic crisis in three-quarters of a century. We've made important investments in our infrastructure, clean energy jobs, science research, and the next generation of workers.

There are clear signs that the economy is improving. Instead of shrinking by 6.4 percent a quarter, the economy has grown by 2.8 percent. Instead of losing 741,000 jobs a month, as the economy did a year ago, last month the economy shed 11,000 jobs. These are encouraging signs.

Yet, I'm not going to sit on my hands and wait for job creation. Families in New Jersey, who have lost a job or had their hours or paychecks cut, are still hurting. And we know employers have cut jobs more sharply and are more hesitant to replace them than in previous downturns.

The government can and should work together to increase employment opportunities in the short-term, mid-term, and long-term. Economists, business leaders, financial experts, among others, have argued that the Federal Government, and only the Federal Government, can inject into the economy a stimulus of sufficient size to make up for the frozen, collapsing economy. The package we are considering today will build on our previous investment, creating needed jobs and helping those who continue to be unemployed.

The Jobs for Main Street Act would redirect \$48.3 billion to put Americans to work rebuilding our Nation's crumbling roads and bridges, modernizing public buildings, and improving air and water quality. Specifically it would invest \$27.5 billion in highway infrastructure improvements, \$8.4 billion for transit improvements, and \$800 million to improve Amtrak. It is estimated that this investment will create over 750,000 new jobs.

Additionally, H.R. 2847 would invest \$2.8 billion in clean water infrastructure, aquatic ecosystem restoration, and flood mitigation; creating another 50,000 jobs. It also will put contractors back to work by providing states with \$4.1 billion for school construction, rehabilitation, and renovations. The \$270 million that this legislation would invest in improving and protecting Federal, State, and local public lands would support approximately 14,000 short-term jobs, improving service to visitors, reducing the large backlog in facilities and habitat restoration needs, and reducing

hazardous fuels that lead to damaging and expensive wildfires. These investments will do more than create jobs in the short term, they will provide long term benefits to all Americans.

Over the past year, I have held a number of events focused on jobs. Two months ago, I brought 50 central Jersey small business owners to Washington to hear their concerns and help them access helpful programs. Two weeks ago, I hosted a jobs forum in central New Jersey. At both events, I heard from small business owners struggling to get the credit and loans they need. The Jobs for Main Street Act would help those small businesses by eliminating fees on Small Business Administration loans and by providing a strong guarantee for Small Business Administration loans to encourage more banks to lend to small businesses. Small businesses are the engine that drives our economy, and during rough economic times they are also the engine that drives job creation. This is one step that Congress is taking to help our small businesses, who generate jobs and develop the innovative products of the future.

I especially am pleased this bill provides funding to ensure that states can keep police officers, firefighters, teachers, and other State and local employees on the job. Without this funding, States would be forced to make the difficult decision between cutting jobs and services or increasing taxes. That is a choice that no state should have to make, especially in difficult economic times.

The Jobs for Main Street Act includes \$1.18 billion to help put more than 5,500 law enforcement officers on the beat throughout the United States, and \$500 million to retain, rehire, and hire firefighters across the United States. According to the International Association of Firefighters, nearly 6,000 firefighters have been laid off or are subject to layoffs. An additional 6,000 positions have been lost through attrition. The bill would provide \$18.9 billion to school districts and public institutions of higher education to retain or create 250,000 teaching jobs.

The recession has hit those between the ages of 16 and 25 particularly hard, and the unemployment rate is especially high for this group. The Jobs for Main Street Act would provide much needed job training and temporary public service positions to get these individuals back to work. The bill would provide \$200 million to hire an additional 25,000 AmeriCorps Members, this funding would enable those individuals to serve their communities while earning an education award to further their education or pay off student loans. With the teenage unemployment rate at its highest rate in history, 27.8 percent, this legislation would invest \$500 million to create 250,000 summer jobs for disadvantaged youth. H.R. 2847 would help up to 250,000 students stay in school by investing \$300 million in the College Work Study program, which supports low- and moderate-income undergraduate and graduate students who work while attending college. Additionally, this legislation would provide \$750 million for competitive grants to support job

training for approximately 150,000 individuals in high growth and emerging industry sectors, particularly in the health care and green industries that are adding jobs despite difficult economic conditions.

For those workers struggling to maintain their health insurance while in between jobs, this bill would extend the COBRA subsidy established in the Recovery Act, which has already benefited approximately 7 million Americans. This expanded COBRA subsidy would help workers for 15 months with their COBRA health insurance premiums and help more Americans access this benefit. Job losses also have caused State Medicaid rolls to swell. This bill temporarily would increase the Federal Government's contribution to Medicaid to ensure States are able to provide health coverage to these workers. This two-prong approach will help ensure millions of unemployed workers are able to maintain health coverage for their families.

When we talk about jobs, we are not just talking about the economy. We are talking about the dignity that comes from holding a steady job that supports your family. The Jobs for Main Street Act recognizes this, and would help our families in real ways. I urge my colleagues to support it.