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Take Back America Conference **Campaign for America's Future / Institute for America's Future**

Plenary Session: An Apollo Project for Energy Independence

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Good afternoon. It is a pleasure to be here and to have the opportunity to fill some pretty big shoes with Rich Trumka not able to join us. I talked to him personally this morning; he is very sick, but he was quite anxious that the message he had to deliver get out here, and I get to be the messenger today and I'm glad to do it.

Some of this will be preaching to the choir. You heard from Leo Gerard this morning, one of the Presidents of the Industrial Union Council. You're going to hear from another of our Presidents in a few minutes. Our message does have some links and ties that remain the same between jobs and the economy. The biggest issue facing the country is the loss of good paying jobs. That has undermined our economy, that is bankrupting our communities. Energy independence gives us a chance to reverse this trend. It is ironic that the health care symposium and this one are occurring at the same time because they are two pieces of something we have been desperately lacking in this country and that is vision. This nation needs some big ideas and I'm going to talk a little bit about why.

We're in the midst of the biggest job market downturn since the Great Depression. Since George W. Bush took office, we've lost 2.4 million jobs. There's no sitting President in this country in the last 50 years that has lost jobs, ever. Even in bad economies. This is the first time ever. It's the biggest decline since Harry Truman. Two million of those jobs are in manufacturing. That is part of the point of our interest in the Apollo Project. And those lost jobs are good paying, full benefit union jobs that are the floor holding up jobs for all other workers in our economy. Manufacturing jobs not only hold up wage and benefit standards, they create other jobs. And manufacturing workers, because they are self-sufficient, contribute greatly to our economy and our communities. They have money to spend and save, and they do. They are good taxpayers and they are good consumers. We also know that helping manufacturing industry means healthy communities; plants and factories pay taxes. The decline in manufacturing is one of the single largest contributing factors to the fiscal deficits that every single one of our states in this country face today. Communities supported by manufacturing have higher rates of education spending, lower rates of poverty and crime, and higher rates of voter participation. Now look, the loss of jobs in our country didn't just happen. God didn't create the job crisis. It was created by men and women in our federal legislature under the direction of an un-elected President.

I have a few numbers to put out there for you. 34, 0, 450, and 2. Whoa, what's that mean? We've done 34 trade agreements in this country over the last decade. Zero is the number of them that have generated a trade surplus in manufacturing. We have a 450 billion dollar trade deficit and we've lost 2 million union manufacturing jobs. That's the new math in this economy. That's what has us so concerned and willing to be here today to talk about vision and new direction. We have the power to change this terrible scorecard, by correcting the flaws in our trade and tax policies and creating a national industrial policy. Oh, did he say those words?!

What do you mean we don't think about industrial policy, every other country in the world does, and I would go back to my scorecard and think about what that means about us not having one. And undertaking initiatives, like the Apollo Project, that are actually dedicated toward creating good jobs in this country and our communities.

The investments we need to make to reduce our dependence on foreign oil and cut energy waste are the same investments we need to restore the hope in our manufacturing industries. In February, in our first meeting as a council, we had 3500 manufacturing workers come here from the 12 unions that comprise our council. It's the first time they've been together as unions like that in a room and I can't tell you the synergy and the energy that arose by people working together on a common plan and having a vision of where they want to go, how much it meant to them to have hope. To have hope in taking on this administration and those henchmen. Energy independence also means investing in public infrastructure, like transit and schools construction to cut vehicle miles traveled, to cut energy waste and to create new demand for steel and our concrete products. Taking energy freedom seriously means investing in a new generation of durable goods and capital stock turnover. Environmental retrofits create new demand and new jobs. We recognize that. When boilers are operated more cleanly, it means more demand for skilled labor, more training, more man hours, more women hours, and less pollution.

We can no longer pit the environment against jobs. This takes me back 20 years to Environmentalists for Full Employment. We were talking over 20 years ago about the necessity for environmental reform and job growth in this country, that these issues come together to create new opportunity, energy independence, and safe and healthy work places. Well, they're still with us today and I applaud the Apollo Project as a step in the right direction that addresses both those concerns. We must demand a larger and bolder vision from our leaders today. While we risk losing our environment and we risk losing our economy, a large scale push on public investment can meet energy and environmental challenges that can create jobs and connect traditional blue collar industries to the technologies of the future. The AFL-CIO is solidly behind initiatives such as the Apollo Project, and a number of our most prestigious unions are part of it. Bracken [Hendricks] announced the list, the machinists, the electrical workers, the sheet metal workers, and the steel workers among them and they are among us today, here.

We believe the public is ready for something big. Especially initiatives that reduce our reliance on foreign oil and on the greedy energy companies that are victimizing all of us. However, the cold hard facts are, we can't do anything until we take back political power in this country.

While shipping more jobs overseas, we continue to import more than we export. The scorecard I referred to, our airports are still vulnerable, the industries that drive our country, manufacturing, transportation and tourism have been run into deep ditches. I remember seeing a sign during recent demonstrations about government action where it said, "Drunk frat boy drives country into the ditch and starts a war to cover up". It's not funny, unfortunately. We are challenged on many fronts. But these and having vision and turning these people out are important. There are rules of reason under a bureaucracy that have been reversed in this administration. We are trapped in what should be an international war against terrorism and when it's enslaved an economy that rewards only the rich. When Bush is not wasting tax dollars on campaign stunts and spending on Homeland Security funds and partisan politics, he's busy dealing from the bottom of the deck for working families. He's spent our surpluses, promoted two of the largest three tax cuts for the wealthy in our history, and has used the shortfalls to force environmental protection to be cut, safety and health to be cut, to cut back worker protections and attack wage standards in this nation. Any surprises on the vote on overtime in the Congress today? In the process, he's set all-time records. Biggest annual deficit, most private bankruptcies in a 12-month period, the biggest drop in the stock market, most foreclosures in a year, and the highest gasoline prices ever. The biggest net job losses in 50 years.

Our first priority, this year and next, must be to reform our progressive, political alliances. We must work together, and work better together. As I travel this country, as Rich [Trumka] travels this country, as President Sullivan and our other officers travel this country, we are confident, absolutely confident there's a firestorm out there to be spread. We are confident with the knowledge that the vast majority of American voters share our viewpoints, and you will hear this from these poll results. We believe in a country where people come ahead of profits. A country where meeting common needs always triumphs over the politics of greed. A nation where workers share equitably in the wealth they help create. A nation where both our communities and workplaces are safe and healthy. Those are the nation's values, and these are the values that built our nation. And we are here to defend those values. This year, next year, and the year after. Let's work harder, let's join together, let's fight harder than ever before, let's stand taller than ever before and let's take this nation back!