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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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When we do take back America—and the longer I spend in this room, the more certain I am that we will—when we do take back America, we are going to rebuild America. We are going to rebuild it to free ourselves from a crippling dependency on imported oil, we are going to rebuild it to reduce our impacts on the environment, and we are going to rebuild it to drive new investment into the productive manufacturing base of our economy, capturing the growth industries of the future for American workers today. We are going to bring jobs and hope and growth back to our communities. We are going to build our future.

My name is Bracken Hendricks, and I run the New Growth Initiative at the Institute for America's Future. It's a joint project with the Center on Wisconsin Strategy that is focused on creating good jobs as we build an economy that's more sustainable.

Our first major undertaking has been to create the Apollo Alliance for Energy Independence, along with our partners: the Common Assets Defense Fund, American's for Energy Freedom, and CTSG. We are creating a project to unite labor unions, environmentalists, socially responsible businesses, and the urban faith and civil rights communities behind a common vision of renewal and reinvestment for this country.

Too often we are told to choose between jobs and the environment. I am here today to say that this is a false choice. We will not be forced into the trade off between putting food on the table for our children today and protecting the health of our children tomorrow. We need to do both. That's what the progressive movement is all about.

We are here because we believe we can make a difference in American politics broadly and in people's daily lives. We can take back America, restoring the economic security of working families, which has been viciously under attack; protecting the environment, which is increasingly strained; and rebuilding our communities to broadly share opportunity and access to the fruits of our labor.

For too long, we have let conservatives practice a politics of division. They are driving wedge issues straight to the top of the national agenda, splitting our alliances, making corporations less accountable, and leaving us all to argue over the details of how to implement their agenda: an agenda of increasing racial and economic polarization

decreasing worker, consumer, and environmental protections, hobbled public institutions; and missed opportunities.

It is time for a big politics that can capture the public imagination, drawing on the greatest examples in our history, building solidarity, offering real alternatives -- a better vision of a better future. Hope, tempered by strong resolve.

We are here today to issue a challenge to our public leaders: move our country rapidly toward energy independence, cut our reliance on foreign oil, and improve the efficiency and performance of our energy system over the next 10 years.

So, we're here today in part to announce a 10 point plan for energy independence, not a plan designed to gather dust on a shelf somewhere. This is a plan designed to reshape old political debates and to rebuild America. This is a plan that drives new investment into existing plants and workers, restores public infrastructure, and rebuilds our cities. I'm proud to announce that this plan has already been supported by the following 10 courageous labor unions, together representing 5.5 million working men and women:

- International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM)
- International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)
- Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers International Union (PACE)
- Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
- Sheet Metal Workers' International Association – (thank you President Sullivan)
- Transport Workers Union of America (TWU)
- United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implementation Workers (UAW)
- United Mine Workers of America (UMWA)
- Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE)
- United Steel Workers of America (USWA)

The Apollo Alliance, working with the United Steel Workers of America, has just completed some public opinion research in key industrial swing states that yielded some remarkable results. What began as an effort to heal the base of the Democratic wing of the Democratic Party has become a powerfully effective message for appealing to all Americans, swing voters in particular, at the center of the electorate. The Steel Workers will hold a press conference on their findings later today.

In our Pennsylvania polling, support among the general electorate for an Apollo project was at 72 percent, but among key swing voters, that support jumped to 81 percent – with 50 percent strongly favoring the project. Swing voters go further, favoring a large federal effort by 90 percent, 53 percent strongly. There is an urgency to the issue of new investment and job creation, and a desire for forward looking technology and industrial policy that is far greater than we had even imagined.

Voters give strong support for federal involvement, strong support for bold action, and strong support for meaningful investment. In short, we found a readiness for something

like the American commitment that built the space program, the interstate highway system, and the backbone of the Internet. Americans are scared for the future of the country, and we know that real public investment yields huge and lasting returns.

The Apollo Project for energy independence will be bold, to match the scale of the problem. We propose spending 300 billion dollars over ten years to invest in infrastructure, fix incentives and drive non-polluting and energy-saving, American-made technologies into the marketplace. It will be broad based, sharing the benefits of investment widely across the economy, while making sure no single sector bears all the costs. And we should not have to wait. It must be immediate, deploying proven and cost-effective strategies that exist today, not placing all our hopes on long-term research and development.

The Apollo Project will break the myth that the environment and the economy are locked in perpetual conflict! It will create a meaningful role for government acting in the public interest. And, it will create or retain three million good jobs, which are more sustainable and more likely to be union, while making the economy more competitive and more productive.

I'm going to briefly walk you through the structure of the plan. It will support four big themes: energy diversity, high performance building, new manufacturing opportunity, and rebuilding public infrastructure.

To begin with, we must move to increase our energy diversity:

America is neglecting the industries of the future while other nations invest. Wind is the fastest growing energy source, but European producers dominate turbine production. Fuel cells are poised to revolutionize technology, but most come from non-union plants in Canada. In 2000, the Japanese government spent \$500 million on photovoltaic cells that make electricity from sunlight, seven times American investment. As a result, US market share has fallen from 90 percent in the small 1980s solar market to 25 percent today as global demand booms. We must provide strong policies and incentives to match European and Japanese commitments. We must invest in improving our base load energy system, ensuring that the best available technology is put to use reducing environmental impacts, and creating good jobs along with reliable and affordable energy, and most importantly, protecting workers in the energy sector.

Second, we must promote High Performance Building:

Buildings account for over \$250 billion of energy use annually, consuming 65 percent of electricity. The average home emits twice the pollution of the average car. K-12 schools nationwide spend \$6 billion a year on energy, and at a time when we are laying off teachers and janitors to cut costs, why aren't we trimming energy bills as well? An aggressive efficiency plan could reduce energy consumption by 20 to 30 percent by 2020. Savings gained by retrofitting buildings and factories, swapping out boilers and chillers, upgrading lighting and ventilation systems, and investing in skilled

maintenance. These are good union jobs in new construction and ongoing operations. We can substitute good work for wasted energy.

Third, we must invest in domestic manufacturing:

The Apollo Project will convert assembly lines and build demand for everything from clean cars to highly efficient appliances, driving up performance, without driving jobs overseas. Already, new industries are emerging. IBEW workers manufacture solar panels in Tennessee. UAW workers build towers for wind generators, in Louisiana, and Machinists are making fuel cells in California. Increased turnover in the capital stock and new demand for durable goods will drive new production of everything from highly efficient industrial motors to lighting ballasts, to steel, concrete, and building materials. Older plants will especially benefit from new incentives for energy retrofits, as new investment in cogeneration and industrial efficiency provide cheap clean energy, cut emissions, and sink new capital into retaining US plants and good jobs.

As for public infrastructure, we must rebuild our cities.

An Apollo Project will also increase public investment in cities. We've neglected our infrastructure to the tune of \$2 trillion dollars! There is a backlog of \$81 billion dollars in un-met transit needs, subways, high-speed bus lanes, and rail projects that have not been build. At the same time automobile congestion costs our country \$70 billion each year, that's a hell of a lot of money.

Smart infrastructure is a key to energy independence, redirecting money from wasted energy toward needed public services. Expanding transportation options will jumpstart economic development, and increase mobility. Fixing highway congestion and building transit, reduce vehicle miles traveled, cut energy consumption and pollution, and drive more work to union job sites in cities. New investment in water and sewer systems can also save up to 35 percent on energy use in this energy intensive sector, while saving public money and protecting government workers.

In coming weeks, we will be expanding our outreach to broaden this coalition among labor, environmental, community, and faith based groups. We will release an open letter, signed by this coalition, to all presidential candidates, calling for the Apollo Project. We will release a white paper analyzing the job creation and environmental benefits of this effort. We will build strategies to leverage pension fund investments to encourage the growth of new, clean, American technology. And we will begin a field and communications effort, engaging at the state level to use this coalition as a force for progressive change. We hope you will join us as a partner in this effort.

The Apollo Alliance can bring Americans together around a progressive and hopeful agenda of reinvestment. This is the surest form of national security, this is real economic stimulus, and this is a practical, progressive, and no nonsense approach to getting things done. This is the new Apollo Alliance. Please join us. Thank you.