



EN ESPAÑOL

Remarks for Senator Barack Obama: National Gypsum in Lorain, Ohio

Lorain, OH | February 24, 2008

Our economy has been struggling for some time now. And as I've traveled across Ohio, I've seen the face of this economy - a mother who told me she can't afford health care for her sick child; a father who's worried he won't be able to send his children to college; and seniors who've seen their pensions disappear because the companies they gave their lives to went bankrupt.

I don't have to tell you about this. Folks around here have been directly impacted by the changes in our economy - whether it was the loss of steel jobs over the past few decades, or the closing of the Ford plant that was here for so long. And folks in this area are still worried about whether they're going to lose their jobs and how they're going to make ends meet if that happens.

Now, if we're honest with ourselves, we'll acknowledge that we can't stop globalization in its tracks and that some of these jobs aren't coming back. But what I refuse to accept is that we have to stand idly by while workers watch their jobs get shipped overseas. We need a president who's working as hard for you as you're working for your families. And that's the kind of President I intend to be.

I've proposed a job-creation agenda that starts with making sure trade works for American workers. We can't keep passing unfair trade deals like NAFTA that put special interests over workers' interests.

Now, Senator Clinton has been going to great lengths on the campaign trail to distance herself from NAFTA. Yesterday, she said NAFTA was "negotiated" by the first President Bush, not by her husband. But let's be clear: it was her husband who got NAFTA passed. In her own book, Senator Clinton called NAFTA one of "Bill's successes" and "legislative victories."

And yesterday, Senator Clinton also said I'm wrong to point out that she once supported NAFTA. But the fact is, she was saying great things about NAFTA until she started running for President. A couple years after it passed, she said NAFTA was a "free and fair trade agreement" and that it was "proving its worth." And in 2004, she said, "I think, on balance, NAFTA has been good for New York and America." One million jobs have been lost because of NAFTA, including nearly 50,000 jobs here in Ohio. And yet, ten years after NAFTA passed, Senator Clinton said it was good for America. Well, I don't think NAFTA has been good for America - and I never have.

I didn't just start criticizing unfair trade deals like NAFTA because I started running for office - I'm doing it because I've seen what happens to a community when the factory closes down and the jobs move overseas. I began my career as a community organizer on the South Side of Chicago, fighting joblessness and poverty in neighborhoods that were devastated when the local steel plant closed.

And it's because of this longstanding commitment to working families that I will not sign any trade agreement as President that does not have protections for our environment and protections for American workers. And I'll pass the Patriot Employer Act that I've been fighting for ever since I ran for the Senate so we can end tax breaks for companies that ship our jobs overseas, and give those breaks to companies that create good jobs with decent wages here in America.

It's also time to let our unions do what they do best - organize our workers. If a majority of workers want a union, they should get a union. It's that simple. We need to stand up to the business lobby, and pass the Employee Free Choice Act. That's why I've been fighting for it in the Senate, and that's why I'll make it the law of the land when I'm President of the United States.

We can also invest in American jobs by investing in America, and rebuilding our roads and bridges. I've proposed a National Infrastructure Reinvestment Bank that will invest \$60 billion over ten years. This will multiply into almost half a trillion dollars of additional infrastructure spending and generate nearly two million new jobs - many of them in the construction industry that's been hard hit by the housing crisis we're facing.

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In addition, we've also got to do more to create the green jobs that are jobs of the future. My energy plan will put \$150 billion over ten years into establishing a green energy sector that will create up to 5 million new jobs over the next two decades - including jobs right here in Ohio that pay well and can't be outsourced. We'll also provide funding to help manufacturers convert to green technology and help workers learn the skills they need for these jobs.

We know that all of this must be done in a responsible way, without adding to the already obscene debt that has grown by four trillion dollars under George Bush. We cannot build our future on a credit card issued by the bank of China. And that is why I'll pay for every part of this job-creation agenda - by ending this war in Iraq that's costing us billions, closing tax loopholes for corporations, putting a price on carbon pollution, and ending George Bush's tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans.

But in the end, enacting this agenda won't just require an investment. It will require a new spirit of cooperation, innovation, and shared sacrifice. We'll have to remind ourselves that we rise and fall as one nation; that a country in which only a few prosper is antithetical to our ideals and our democracy; and that those of us who have benefited greatly from the blessings of this country have a solemn obligation to open the doors of opportunity, not just for our children, but to all of America's children. That's the kind of vision I have for this country, and that's the kind of vision I hope to make real as President of the United States.



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