

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

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REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AT GRADUATION OF COLUMBUS POLICE DIVISION'S 114TH CLASS

Aladdin Shrine Center
Columbus, Ohio

10:53 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Please, everybody have a seat. Thank you so much.

Well, what a wonderful reception. Thank you very much. I want to begin by thanking Mayor Coleman, Director Brown, and the entire Columbus police force for inviting me to be a part of this ceremony. It is a great honor and a privilege to stand with the men and women of this police academy's 114th graduating class. (Applause.) You have studied hard, you have trained tirelessly, and there is no longer any doubt that you will be employed as officers of the law when you leave here today. (Applause.)

I also want to just very quickly acknowledge one of the finest governors in the country, who's been just dealing with all kinds of stuff and doing it with grace and aplomb and never breaks a sweat, but is working hard on behalf of his constituency -- Ted Strickland. (Applause.) The Attorney General of the United States, Eric Holder. (Applause.)

I came out here with a number of members of the Ohio congressional delegation, but I want to make a special note of my former colleague when I was in the Senate who is just as passionate about working people as anybody in the country, Sherrod Brown. Give Sherrod a big round of applause. (Applause.)

This city of Columbus needs the courage and the commitment of this graduating class to keep it safe, to make sure that people have the protection that they need. This economy needs your employment to keep it running. Just this morning we learned that we lost another 651,000 jobs throughout the country in the month of February alone, which brings the total number of jobs lost in this recession to an astounding 4.4 million.

Four point four million jobs. I don't need to tell the people of this state what statistics like this mean, because so many of you have been watching jobs disappear long before this recession hit. And I don't need to tell this graduating class what it's like to know that your job might be next, because up until a few weeks ago, that is precisely the future that this class faced -- a future that millions of Americans still face right now.

Well, that is not a future I accept for the United States of America. (Applause.) That is why I signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act into law. (Applause.)

Now there were those -- there were those who argued that our recovery plan was unwise and unnecessary. They opposed the very notion that government has a role in ending the cycle of job loss at the heart of this recession. There are those who believe that all we can do is repeat the very same policies that led us here in the first place.

But I also know that this country has never responded to a crisis by sitting on the sidelines and hoping for the best. I know that throughout our history, we have met every great challenge with bold action and big ideas. That's what's fueled a shared and lasting prosperity. And I know that at this defining moment for America we have a responsibility to ourselves and to our children to do it once again. We have a responsibility to act, and that's what I intend to do as President of the United States of America. (Applause.)

So for those who still doubt the wisdom of our recovery plan, I ask them to talk to the teachers who are still able to teach our children because we passed this plan. I ask them to talk to the nurses who are still able to care for our sick, and the firefighters and first responders who will still be able to keep our communities safe. I ask them to come to Ohio and meet the 25 men and women who will soon be protecting the streets of Columbus because we passed this plan. (Applause.) I look at these young men and women, I look into their eyes and I see their badges today and I know we did the right thing.

These jobs and the jobs of so many other police officers and teachers and firefighters all across Ohio will now be saved because of this recovery plan -- a plan that will also create jobs in every corner of this state. Last week, we announced that Ohio would receive \$128 million that will put people to work renovating and rebuilding affordable housing. (Applause.) On Tuesday -- on Tuesday I announced that we'd be sending another \$935 million to Ohio that will create jobs rebuilding our roads, our bridges, and our highways. (Applause.) And yesterday, Vice President Biden announced \$180 million for this state that will go

towards expanding mass transit and buying fuel-efficient buses -- money that will be putting people to work, getting people to work. (Applause.)

Altogether, this recovery plan will save and create over three and a half million American jobs over the next two years. Because of this plan, those who have lost their jobs in this recession will be able to receive extended unemployment benefits and continued health care coverage. Because of this plan, 95 percent of working Americans will receive a tax break that you will see in your paychecks starting on April 1st. (Applause.)

And because of this plan, stories like the one we're celebrating here in Columbus will soon take place all across this nation.

Today I'm pleased to announce that Attorney General Eric Holder and the Department of Justice are making available \$2 billion in Justice Assistance Grants from the recovery act. (Applause.) That's funding that will help communities throughout America keep their neighborhoods safer with more cops, more prosecutors, more probation officers; more radios and equipment; more help for crime victims and more crime prevention programs for youth. Cities and states can apply for these funds right away, and as soon as those applications are received, the Justice Department will start getting the money out the door within 15 days.

In Savannah, Georgia, the police department would use this funding to hire more crime and intelligence analysts and put more cops on the beat protecting our schools. In Long Beach, California, it will be able to help fund 17,000 hours of overtime for law enforcement officials who are needed in high-crime areas. West Haven, Connecticut will be able to restore crime prevention programs that were cut, even though they improved the quality of life in the city's most troubled neighborhoods. And the state of Iowa will be able to rehire drug enforcement officers and restart drug prevention programs that have been critical in fighting the crime and violence that plagues too many cities and too many towns.

So the list goes on and on. From Maine to San Francisco, from Colorado to New Jersey, these grants will put Americans to work doing the work necessary to keep America safe. They'll be directed only towards worthy programs that have been carefully planned and proven to work -- and Vice President Biden and I will be holding every state and community accountable for the tax dollars they spend.

Now, by itself, this recovery plan won't turn our economy around or solve every problem. In the flight over here with the Ohio delegation, I talked to them about the fact that we've got big challenges ahead of us. We inherited a big mess. This police force still faces budget challenges

down the road, there are still workers in Columbus who are losing their jobs, and there is still so much work to be done throughout Ohio to lay a new foundation for growth and prosperity.

That's the work we must continue in the days and months ahead. That's why my administration is also moving quickly and aggressively to restart lending for families and businesses; to help responsible homeowners pay their mortgages and refinance their homes; to address the major economic challenges of our time: the cost of health care, our dependence on foreign oil, the state of our schools.

All of this takes time and it will take patience. It will entail great effort and cooperation. But most of all, it will require a renewed sense of responsibility from every American -- a responsibility to ourselves and one another; a responsibility that's already been demonstrated by the men and women who are sitting behind me here today.

The job you signed up for is not easy. It can mean long shifts and late nights. It demands focus, and determination, and great bravery in the face of unknown dangers. When you run into that building or chase down that suspect, you will be risking your own life in order to protect the lives of men and women you have never met, and some that you may never know.

But you knew all that when you joined the academy. You knew the risks involved, you knew the sacrifices required, and yet you stood up and said, "I'll take that risk. I'll make that sacrifice. I will do that job."

And that, Columbus, is the very essence of responsibility. That's the spirit we need in this country right now, no matter what our role is or what our profession that we've chosen. It's a spirit that asks us to look beyond our own individual ambitions to the wider obligations we have as the good citizens of a great nation; a spirit that calls on us to say, "I'll make that sacrifice. I'll do that job."

If we can summon that spirit once more; if we're willing to look out for one another and listen to one another; if we are willing to pull together and do our part; if we can show even a fraction of the courage and selflessness that these cadets have already demonstrated, then I have no doubt that we will emerge from this crisis stronger than before and keep this nation's dream alive for future generations.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. (Applause.)

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11:06 A.M. EST

