

September 2, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
President
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President:

As you prepare to detail for the nation a major new jobs initiative, I wish to share some of the invaluable suggestions I have heard from thousands of Americans over the past few months.

During August alone, I have traveled across my own state of Alaska – often with top members of your administration – where we have heard scores of innovative and practical ideas for continuing our nation's economic recovery. Alaskans are never shy about sharing their opinions and we believe that if an idea can work in Alaska's challenging climate and great distances, it can work anywhere.

As chairman of the Senate Democratic Steering and Outreach Committee since January, I have been privileged to preside over more than 40 face-to-face meetings and conference calls involving more than 2,500 Americans. These national leaders hail from a cross-section of business sectors, civic organizations and ethnic groups: community bankers, Hispanic, African-American and Native American leaders, economists, contractors, veterans, visitor industry executives, educators, top corporate executives, small business owners, technology innovators, explorers, fishermen, auto dealers, local Chambers of Commerce officials, hunters and fishermen, senior citizen advocates, religious leaders, realtors and state and local government officials. What they all have in common are useful ideas for getting our economy back on track and an unwavering commitment to working across political parties to implement them.

Here are many of the jobs-creating suggestions I have received:

- Expand broadband access to rural communities to improve opportunities for education, medicine and commerce for rural Americans.

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- Expand the New Markets Tax Credit to encourage small businesses to expand, especially in rural America and for Native-owned businesses.
- Streamline permitting for resource development on Native American lands where there is potentially a trillion dollars in untapped revenue and jobs.
- Expand the international visa waiver program so international visitors and business people can more easily visit America for tourism and to purchase American products.
- Create a national infrastructure bank with dedicated funding to rebuild America's crumbling roads, bridges, ports, energy generation and transmission networks and water and sewer systems which are so vital to commerce and basic transportation.
- Expand and make permanent the Research and Development Tax Credit to encourage more innovation and investment by American companies.
- Expand the clean-up of formerly used defense sites and bases around the country.
- Encourage greater investment in green energy initiatives at U.S. military bases.
- Continue or expand weatherization initiatives to create jobs, conserve fossil fuels and reduce energy costs.
- Expand grants to states and local education agencies to improve science, technology, education and math which are so vital for the 21st century workforce.
- Provide construction bonds for states and local entities for housing for teachers and medical providers working in the most remote parts of America.
- Expand national seafood marketing to increase domestic sale of American seafood.
- Maintain basic fisheries research such as stock assessments which is vital for the nation's seafood industry jobs.
- Make low interest loans to hard-hit cities and states to prevent the layoff of teachers, police officers and firefighters.

I fully appreciate that some of these suggestions are challenging to launch and many require congressional action, so I remain committed to working with your administration and within the Senate to implement steps to keep our economic recovery underway.

Sincerely,



Mark Begich
United States Senator