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AND THE WORKFORCE  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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September 9, 2011

The Honorable John Kline  
Chairman  
Committee on Education and the Workforce  
2181 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kline:

Last night before a Joint Session of Congress, President Obama proposed the American Jobs Act, a package of proposals to create jobs immediately and spur future economic growth. Given the urgency of our nation's job situation and since the House Education and the Workforce Committee has jurisdiction over a number of the proposals in this plan, I respectfully request that you immediately schedule committee hearings on these important initiatives outlined by President Obama.

During the recent August recess, Members heard from their constituents. The message was loud and clear. The American people share the President's sense of urgency that Congress must act together and act quickly to create jobs.

Economists agree that creating jobs is the first, most important step we need to take to grow the economy, reduce the deficit, and keep Americans working. Creating jobs now is the key to fixing nearly every other economic problem America faces today.

Businesses have repeatedly pointed out that their hiring has stalled for lack of demand. By taking measures to directly put more Americans back to work, we grow demand. Workers are consumers.

As you know, in the wake of the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, the country's unemployment situation is in dire need of attention. With more than 14 million Americans officially out of work, unemployment remains above 9 percent. A staggering 6.2 million Americans have been unemployed for more than 6 months. This long-term unemployment threatens to knock these workers permanently out of the middle class. Some sectors have been hurt worse than others. The construction industry's nationwide unemployment rate stands in double digits. Public service jobs, like teachers, firefighters, and police, continue to suffer from the downturn and its impact on state and local budgets. Just this summer, 85,000 school personnel received pink slips, bringing the total of education workers losing their jobs since September 2008 to 290,000. Those job losses result in larger class sizes, not to mention damaging pauses in teaching careers we should be nurturing.

The President proposed several items within our Committee's jurisdiction that can save and create jobs now and help the unemployed find work. Some significant measures in our jurisdiction include:

- A school modernization program, benefiting at least 35,000 public schools, would put construction workers to work repairing schools, upgrading science labs, and making classrooms internet-ready. A portion of this program would be used for modernizing facilities in our nation's critical community college system.
- Education jobs funding would stop the layoffs of 280,000 teachers and support the hiring of tens of thousands more.
- An employment law reform would prohibit employers from discriminating against unemployed workers when hiring.
- A Pathways Back to Work fund for low-income individuals would provide for subsidized employment, support for innovative training programs, including at community colleges, and summer and year-round job opportunities for youth.
- The long-term unemployed can benefit from measures to improve reemployment assistance, and work-share proposals intend to save the jobs of workers who would otherwise be laid off.

The President's proposals have enjoyed bipartisan support in the past. For example, you have long called for reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act. We should act on reauthorization and reinvigorate reemployment assistance and job training efforts. The important question is whether this Congress can work together with our President to help start creating jobs now. Congress must put partisanship aside and seize this moment to move our economy forward.

It is well past time for this Congress to refocus on jobs and take action to grow and strengthen America's middle class. The President's plan deserves to be heard. Our Committee should schedule hearings on his proposals as soon as possible.

I look forward to hearing from you on how our Committee will respond to the President's call to action and to working with you on these matters.

Sincerely,



**GEORGE MILLER**  
Senior Democratic Member