

*(Remarks as Delivered)*

“I feel like I’ve seen this movie before. But I know the plot and the characters are a little different. I hope that given that we have a hard and fast deadline before us we are able to focus a bit more this time around.

“I know that all of us understand the task before us. And I believe it’s very straight forward. We need to strengthen our economy. We have to take care to not do anything to derail that economic recovery that’s underway.

“As Mr. Levin pointed out, we’ve seen some job creation—3.2 million jobs over the last 22 months. Last December, 212 thousand jobs created. And in the last year, 2011, we’ve seen more jobs created since 2005—1.9 million jobs were created in the private sector.

“We’ve seen some progress but if you were to ask Americans across the country, too many would probably say that we still have a lot of climbing to do. And I don’t blame them. When you see 4 people looking for every 1 job that is available, you know that there’s something still wrong in America. When you see that while we’ve recovered 3 million jobs since the depths of the recession, it doesn’t help if there’s 6 million who are still looking for jobs they lost at the height of the recession. So I think this committee knows what it has to do.

“I would like to focus on something that I received from a person in California. Her name is Faye. She writes:

I have been unemployed since October 2010. I have sent out over 3000 job applications, have had 33 responses, 4 interviews and was told by each one that I am overqualified or under educated. I am a bookkeeper and I have an AA in mathematics and bookkeeping certification.

I am very grateful for the benefits that I received through unemployment but in order to survive, I moved myself and my teen age son into a shared apartment in San Francisco. This is fine. We share a bedroom separated by a screen. We share the flat with 4 other roommates. This is fine. Not ideal, but we are not homeless.

We barely have enough for food, but we do not qualify for food stamps so I have learned to eat less and try to make each dollar go very far. There are no extras in our lives. No internet, no tv, no going out. I am ok, but it is painful at times.

I point this out, because as grateful as I am for the benefits (we are not homeless or starving) they are not fun....and I am looking for work day-in, day-out.

I go to the One Stop EDD center daily, or to the library for the computer. I go to job seeker workshops weekly that are sponsored by local charities and churches. I apply at restaurants, grocery stores, childcare and am told that since I have no experience, that I am not qualified.

I moved to San Francisco because there are more jobs here than where I was....and I needed to sell my car to get by so I needed to be somewhere that has public transportation.

I pray to God each night and each morning...but sometimes it is hard not to be scared. If I did not share my room with my son, I would cry myself to sleep. I want a job so badly.

I will be destitute if benefits are not extended. My son and I will be homeless by February 1, 2012 if these are not extended. I have no one to ask for help, no family on which to rely. I am very very scared right now. I will GLADLY accept any training or schooling requirements that come with extension....things are bad and need to change.

“That’s Faye in San Francisco, California. If there’s anything that focuses the mind it’s when Americans are talking to us and I think they’re talking loud and clear.

“I believe we can get this done. I think each and everyone who has taken this assignment understands we have a hard and fast deadline—we’ve got about a month. We know what we need to do. Our task before us is pretty simple with the three most important things we could tackle: extend that payroll tax cut for middle class American workers; take care of those benefits for people who have lost their job through no fault of their own; and give seniors and their doctors the security and certainty that they need to know that Medicare will be there the way they need it.

“If we get that done, we can talk about a lot of other things but first and foremost let’s focus on the task at hand. Faye is very focused. We should be as well.”