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55 YEARS

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Mayor's message: "Ready to Go" - a report filed to Congress

January 07, 2009 - Rhode Island

New Year's celebrations embody the optimism of people worldwide: it is the moment when we start anew with our lives.

In the darkest and coldest days of winter - especially here, in the hard-hit New England region - we eagerly await the days of promise that lie ahead.

January 20, 2009 will be one of those great days. A nation waits with anticipation to the swearing in of our 44th President, Barack Obama. This precedent-setting election reminded us of the power of coming together for a common goal. Throughout the election and in this transition, President-elect Obama has demonstrated a profound understanding of what Americans need and the administration and programs he is crafting will respond in kind.

For those in government and the private sector, addressing our struggling economy could not come at a better time.

Last month, I had the privilege of joining 13 other mayors from across the country, to urge Congressional action on the MainStreet Economic Recovery program. Our report, "Ready to Go," detailed the \$570 million in infrastructure projects that could be started immediately, if funds were made available: representative projects that alone totaled more than 6,600 jobs.

For development, brokers and investors, business and government leaders alike - we cheer the possibilities.

Our statement to Congress was simple: cities are the 'boots on the ground.' And there's a quadruple impact in funding infrastructure: good jobs right here in America, a modernized platform for moving people and products in the 21st century economy, increased homeland security, and an increased quality of life. Not to mention the costs of not investing, as we remember with the levees.

Late last month, I returned to Washington with nine other mayors, to meet transition team members - Obama senior adviser Valerie Jarrett; Cecilia Munoz, incoming director of intergovernmental relations and others. We talked earnestly about the economic stimulus package and the new White House Office of Urban Policy, and our cities' unique ability to create jobs quickly.

For the last half-hour of that meeting, we met directly with the President-elect Obama. He promised us help is on the way, that the stimulus package will be substantial, and that cities will play a critical role throughout this process.

I am fully confident - as are my peers- that President Obama hears and clearly understands the urgency of the situation we are facing, that he recognizes the vital influence metropolitan areas have upon our economy, and the need to implement a very thoughtful jobs-stimulus package.

Investing in our schools, transit systems, roads and highways, green jobs, housing, parks, water and sewer systems will create jobs for American families and a much-needed boost to our economy. We truly are "Ready to Go," and wait with hope for our new President who will help us get there.

David Cicilline is the mayor of Providence.

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