

Obama aiming for 2.5 million new jobs by 2011

By Will Lester

Special to Sentinel-Voice

(NNPA) — President-elect Barack Obama has promoted an economic plan that would provide 2.5 million jobs by rebuilding roads and bridges and modernizing schools while developing alternative energy sources and more efficient cars.

"These aren't just steps to pull ourselves out of this immediate crisis. These are the long-term investments in our economic future that have been ignored for far too long," Obama said in the weekly Democratic radio address Nov. 22.

The goal is to get the plan quickly through Congress, with help from both parties, after Obama takes office Jan. 20. The plan, which envisions those new jobs by January 2011, is "big enough to meet the challenges we face,"

he said.

The president-elect said he has asked his economic advisers to flesh out the recovery plan — one "big enough to meet the challenges we face. ... We'll be working out the details in the weeks ahead, but it will be a two-year, nationwide effort to jump-start job creation in America and lay the foundation for a strong and growing economy."

Obama's radio address talked about the goal of job creation and said his economic plan "will mean 2.5 million more jobs by January of 2011."

The Obama website said his plan will "save or create" 2.5 million jobs. Obama spokesman Robert Gibbs confirmed that the plan "will save and create" the 2.5 million jobs.

The African-American

community has been the hardest hit with joblessness with consistently twice the number of unemployed as the White community and consistently in double digits. Last month, the African-American jobless rate was 10.6 percent.

In his address, Obama noted the growing evidence the country is "facing an economic crisis of historic proportions" and said he was pleased Congress passed an extension of unemployment benefits this past week. But, he added, "We must do more to put people back to work and get our economy moving again."

Nonetheless, he said, "There are no quick or easy fixes to this crisis, which has been many years in the making, and it's likely to get worse before it gets better."

It will take support from

Democrats and Republicans to pass the economic plan, Obama said.

"I'll be welcome to ideas and suggestions from both sides of the aisle," he said. "But what is not negotiable is the need for immediate action."

People "are lying awake at night wondering if next week's paycheck will cover next month's bills," if their jobs will remain, if their retirement savings will disappear, he added.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., said congressional Democrats will "continue pushing for aggressive but necessary measures. Part of that is passing a substantial economic recovery package, like the one President-elect Obama discussed this morning, that creates good-paying jobs here in America and stabi-

lizes a volatile market."

In a slap at President George W. Bush, Reid added, "We will soon finally have a leader and partner in the White House who recognizes the urgency with which we must turn around our economy, and I look forward to working with him and the new Congress to do so."

The Labor Department reported that claims for unemployment benefits jumped last week to the highest level since July 1992, providing fresh evidence of the weakening job market.

"We'll put people back to work rebuilding our crumbling roads and bridges, modernizing schools that are failing our children, and building wind farms and solar panels," Obama said.

He also made a commitment to fuel-efficient cars and alternative energy tech-

nologies "that can free us from our dependence on foreign oil and keep our economy competitive in the years ahead."

Greg Wetstone, director of government and public affairs for the American Wind Energy Association, applauded Obama's plans to expand alternative energy resources and called it a "concept very much branded in reality."

"With the policies he has outlined for renewable energy, President-elect Obama is removing the single largest impediment to renewable energy development in this country, which has been the absence of a long-term federal commitment to deploy these technologies."

A spokesman for the trucking industry's main trade group on Saturday said (See Jobs, Page 4)

Conference

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Continuation of the tradition of Black people convening to find strategies and tactics to fight the challenges of Black people in America and African people worldwide," said Dr. Conrad Worrill of the National Black United Front. "It goes back to the 19th century — the Negro Convention Movement — and this follows in that tradition and its significance with the recent election of President-elect Barack Obama finds us challenged to rise to the occasion in our organizing efforts to find solutions."

During the five day conference, several working sessions were held calling together the great scholarship and leadership within the Black community.

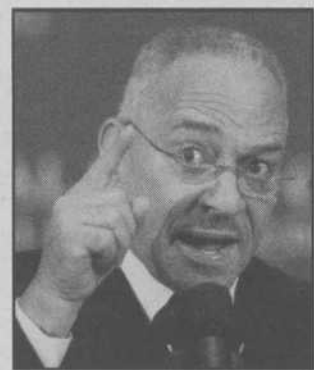
A town hall meeting focusing on a Black agenda brought together those interested in crafting a plan to be addressed by the Obama administration.

"We're here today to discuss a new way and come together like we have never come together before," said radio talk show host Bev Smith.

Political scientist and author Dr. Ron Walters said that for the first time, Blacks voted at a higher level than Whites in an election and remarked that Black people have "turned a corner" and that the success of Barack Obama is one that Black people can look to with a source of pride.

Bennett College president Dr. Julianne Malveaux remarked that agendas have been presented to the Obama administration by other ethnic groups, why not a Black agenda?

"The celebration is about



the symbolism, but what is the substance?" asked Dr. Malveaux.

"We need to lay out an agenda and that agenda is jobs, jobs, jobs. The words 'poverty' and 'urban' were banned from the (presidential) campaign. It's up to us to raise them again," she added.

CEO of the National Urban League Marc Morial, who also served as mayor of New Orleans from 1994 to 2002 said he had faith in President-elect Barack H. Obama because he knows the reality of urban life, having spent time as an organizer in Chicago.

He also cautioned against unrealistic expectations or complacency now that a Black man is headed to the White House.

"We made history (but we didn't elect a messiah," said Morial "We didn't elect a savior. We expect him to live up to the things that he committed to, but civic engagement does not end on Election Day," he added.

"One of many things that the media got angry about back in April is that I would not let them tell me who my friends were."

— Jeremiah Wright

As a board member of the TransAfrica Forum, moderator and award winning actor Danny Glover said Black people in America have a responsibility to do what they can to help the continent by involving themselves in "strategic and important dialogue" along with action. He also pointed to the youth as a key component in improving the educational and economic conditions in places like Haiti and on the African continent.

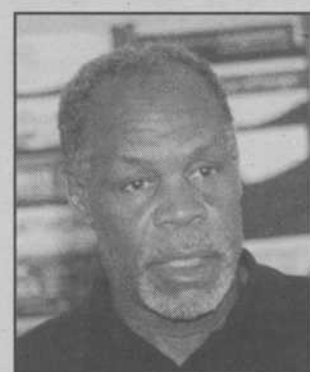
"Paul Robeson once said that every generation makes its own history. I think the generation of young people was represented by the election of Barack Obama," said Glover.

"But I think it's more than just that. There are young people out here doing great

and extraordinary work in the fight for justice. We need to invest in young people and young people need to stand up to make their own history."

The Institute of the Black World held the Legacy Awards ceremony honoring those consistently on the front lines of the struggle for Black liberation. Among those honored was Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright. After graciously thanking many of those joining him on the stage, he delivered special words of thanks and appreciation on behalf of Black people for Farrakhan and the two men embraced to the cheers of the crowd.

"One of many things that the media got angry about back in April is that I would not let them tell me who my



stood in support of him. "While they were using me as the whipping boy, they were waiting on him (Farrakhan) to say anything. Anything. He held his peace in order that Barack may be our president. My brother, we owe a debt of gratitude that we can never repay."

Dr. Ron Daniels, president of the Institute of the Black World called it an "incredible and powerful moment" that many at SOBWC II will not soon forget.

Though not talking much to the media over the past few months, Wright told *The Final Call* that it was an evening of "mixed emotions" the night he heard the news that Barack H. Obama had been elected president.

"It was like it was all worth it," said Wright. "I told

"We need to invest in young people and young people need to stand up to make their own history."

— Danny Glover

one of the reporters from the *Los Angeles Times*, that I had been supporting Barack for years long before many of them could even pronounce his name, and to see all of that hard work come to fruition was a sign of hope with

my biggest hope being that all of those that worked so hard to get him elected will continue to work (because) he can't do this all by himself," Wright added.

Wright also said that on the night of the election, when his family was celebrating Obama's victory, it was painful when his name was still being tarnished in the media and that he could not be present in Grant Park for the celebration.

"It was a great feeling — it was painful in that I couldn't be there because of his support(ers) hating me — many of them — and my presence being something that would hurt him, that was painful because long before they knew him, I was pushing him and supporting him. It was like seeing one of your children finally make it to the big stage, but you can't be there with him. It was a mixed emotion kind of night. In fact, as I was celebrating and enjoying the moment, CNN mentioned my name in a negative light — that night! They won't let it go, but it was good seeing that come to pass."

Said Daniels, "To see these giants coming together and to show these two men that we have their backs, to see that they have each other's backs... We may never see that in a collective setting like this again, it was just incredible."

Ashahed M. Muhammad writes for *The Final Call*.