

**TESTIMONY OF TERENCE M. O'SULLIVAN
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LABORERS' INTERNATIONAL UNION OF NORTH AMERICA
TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE,
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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On behalf of the Laborer's International Union of North America (LIUNA), the men and women who dedicate their lives to building America, I want to express our gratitude for the opportunity to be heard here today.

Chairman Shuster, it is an honor to be at this first hearing under your leadership and the Laborers respect your willingness to take on what will be a tremendous challenge. We are confident that your commitment to our nation and your family's legacy of contributing to safeguarding our fundamental infrastructure will serve you well.

By way of introduction, LIUNA is an organization of half a million workers in four hundred Local Unions across the United States who go to work every day building America. We are proud to be at the forefront of the fight to highlight our nation's infrastructure needs and to represent the men and women in the trenches who can do something about it.

Our commitment includes a long standing partnership with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce through the Americans for Transportation Mobility. It includes supporting the work of Building America's Future and other allies. It includes being as vocal as we can on this issue and we are eager for it to include working with your committee as we have done historically.

LIUNA members build our highways and mass transit systems, our bridges, our dams and our airport runways. We maintain sewer systems, dig tunnels, build pipelines and erect wind and

solar farms. But we don't only build; like all working people, we rely on the basic infrastructure of America every day.

Infrastructure is the foundation of our great nation. It was created with a strong federal role and it must be maintained and modernized with a strong federal role. Without a robust federal investment in our infrastructure networks, there isn't enough private money alone to get the job done.

Taking care of America's infrastructure is a core function and responsibility of the federal government with its origins in the Constitution and I congratulate and commend this committee for addressing these issues at its first hearing. It's a responsibility we must live up to.

We are facing dire needs and it is time to stop passing the buck and get serious about America's critical infrastructure. As I speak to you, our roads, bridges and highways and public transit systems are suffering from such a chronic under investment that the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) predicts we will lose \$1 trillion dollars in business sales, \$324 billion in exports and \$1.2 trillion in personal disposable income which will result in the loss of one million jobs annually by 2020, if the problem is not addressed.

In 2012, after years of debate, Congress finally passed a surface transportation bill which invested \$105 billion in our nation's surface transportation system. It's a good first step but in reality it's a patch and only a drop in the bucket compared to our actual needs.

The statistics can seem overwhelming, numbing and are certainly beyond the capacity of cities or counties or even states to address: A quarter of our bridges are deficient or obsolete. Seven billion gallons of clean drinking water are lost to leaking pipes annually. Of the 257 locks on the more than 12,000 miles of inland waterways operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, nearly 50% are functionally obsolete and by 2020 that number will increase to 80%.

This is America. We can't let this happen, especially when so many men and women are in need of exactly this kind of work. Our country needs a comprehensive plan to tackle this crisis, a new

way to think about and invest in the basics of America on the scale of the Marshall Plan which rebuilt Europe after World War II.

It was that kind of inspiration, dedication and visionary leadership that freed us to become the first country to land on the moon, to win the cold war and to become a beacon of hope and promise around the globe.

That means that we must choose to make building America a priority and commit the necessary resources - a task which is easier said than done. However, that is what it will take to get the job done and it would be irresponsible not to do it. The nation's needs present a challenge, but if we accept, it we can build America and build our economy at the same time.

As I speak to you, the construction industry has suffered the most sustained downturn in 40 years with two million fewer jobs in the industry than at the peak in April of 2006 and with the unemployment rate at 16.1% - the result is real suffering.

The solution is staring us in the face. Adequate investment in surface transportation could create eight million jobs over four years according to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation officials. Needed investment in water resource systems and our nation's domestic engineering production could also create millions of jobs. Not just good construction jobs, jobs throughout the economy across all sectors.

Construction jobs are good jobs. They provide family supporting pay that benefits the working middle class who have been among the hardest hit by the recession. Americans are struggling with job loss, with foreclosures, with devastated retirement savings and with the very ability to simply make ends meet. And the work these men and women could be doing is critical to our country, making us more competitive in the global economy.

Emerging nations such as India and China are investing four-times the share of their nation's GDP's in infrastructure as we are. It is not an overstatement to say that this will test the greatness

of America. The American workers who are proud to say they build for a living have a self-interest at stake but their stake does not end with self interest.

Investing now protects taxpayers, because for every year of inaction and delay the cost increases \$150 billion more due to further deterioration, according to the ASCE. It will take a lot of effort to figure this out and make it happen, but it is a no brainer to get started now.

We can help rescue our economy, rescue working America and leave behind real assets that will benefit taxpayers and our entire nation for generations to come. This isn't a Republican issue or a Democratic issue. There isn't a single American who doesn't benefit from and doesn't want good roads and safe bridges, clean drinking water and efficient airports, waterways, abundant energy and good jobs.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony. We are eager and excited to work with you in the future. Together we can build America so America works.

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