

# BuildAmerica2010

**Statement of Terry O'Sullivan  
General President, Laborers' International Union of North America  
Launch of Build America 2010  
LIUNA Headquarters, Washington, DC  
May 14, 2010**

I want to thank everyone for being here today for the launch of Build America 2010.

The state of our nation's critical, fundamental infrastructure – our transportation systems, our water resources, energy systems and other basics – is dire.

That is well-documented, often discussed and to date rarely acted upon.

The state of the basics of America threatens our ability to compete in the world and threatens economic recovery. But it also offers a once in a lifetime opportunity to truly build America - to build America so America works.

We can get our economy moving again and leave future generations with a nation no other nation can overshadow.

Build America 2010 will be one of the most significant efforts LIUNA has launched and we believe one of the most comprehensive and significant efforts undertaken around these critical issues.

A key part of Build America 2010 is making building America the priority it must be – and you as journalists play a key role in the critical analysis of that.

So we thank you for being here.

By way of background, a few words about who we are.

LIUNA is one of the largest, most aggressive and progressive unions of construction workers.

Our half-million members build America – highways, bridges, dams, transit systems, water resources and wastewater systems, school facilities and other pieces of the backbone of our country which we rely on every day.

LIUNA members – like everyone in the construction industry – are struggling with Depression-era unemployment. Nationally, more than 1 in 5, or nearly 2 million construction workers are jobless.

So our role as advocates for building America stems from the interest of LIUNA members as workers - but it is more than that.

It is about who we are as working people struggling with a transportation system or school facilities that often no longer work.

It is about our patriotic concern that the global economy will overtake us if we cannot move goods and people efficiently or if our energy continues to be tied to foreign sources.

The American Society of Civil Engineers has documented a \$2.2 trillion need in America's basics – just to bring them up to standard. Actual investment continues to be a fraction of that and the deficit between needs and investment continually rises.

Consider the stalled Surface Transportation Act.

The Surface Transportation Act, which authorizes investment through the Highway Trust Fund, is the single biggest job creating legislation in our country and cares for the foundation of our transportation system.

Without a new Surface Transportation Act, the Highway Trust Fund will again be broke next year.

The clock is ticking.

Even if resources for the fund remain status quo, by 2012 the fund will be at 50 percent of its current level and will not fully recover in years beyond that in part because of decreases in gas tax user fees, according to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

That is a recipe for stalled economic recovery. It will cause America to fall behind much of the world. And it will result in the loss of an estimated 2 million jobs over four years.

On the other hand, if we invested what the experts recommend, we would create more than 8 million jobs over that time period.

The core strategy of Build America 2010 is to move votes in the United States Senate to increase investment.

The U.S. House has produced significant jobs-creating legislation which would invest in building America – legislation which we believe the President would sign – but legislation consistently dies in the Senate.

Our goal is to change that and we aim to do that with a member-driven and media-driven movement that unites allies in communities, in business and in government.

We begin Tuesday with the launch of Build Colorado 2010 in Denver.

We have engaged both Senators Bennet and Udall to take up this cause and the offices of both senators have indicated they will have representatives present on Tuesday.

We continue on through spring and summer with a variety of states, ultimately engaging eight to 10 Senators or candidates for the Senate.

Likely states in addition to Colorado include:

- Indiana, Missouri, Iowa, Ohio, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Virginia and possibly more.

Our view is there are no targets in Build America 2010 – there are only potential allies and heroes who will take on this issue, either as incumbents or as candidates.

As our members in Colorado organize to kick off Build Colorado 2010, the level of activism there has soared. In less than a week more than 100 members volunteered for full-day volunteer organizer training.

Many of those new activists will be visiting their elected officials in June and beyond; they'll be writing letters to their newspapers, reaching out to fellow members, phone-banking, and everything they can do to fight for their jobs, their families and their country.

In every state, members will drive this engine and we expect to add more than 3,000 members to the 20,000 current member activist base.

Build America 2010 will be media-driven. Behind me here, you can see replicas of billboards that are going up in Denver – before a structurally deficient bridge on Interstate 70 and before a deficient bridge in the city on Sixth Avenue. In every state where we focus we will do the same to highlight deficient and obsolete bridges – of which there are 149,663 in America – and to start the conversation about taking care of this country.

We will use online ads, such as with Google maps so motorists know if their route includes deficient bridges.

We will use radio ads, in some cases TV ads, and every available outreach tool.

We are the first to acknowledge that the issues of building America could not be more complex or more serious.

The needs are enormous and documented and rather than reiterate them here, these details are included in fact sheets in your materials.

The Minneapolis bridge collapse of several years ago, exploding sewer lines, transit crashes and contaminated drinking water are but extreme examples of what has happened to our country.

I should note that LIUNA members were working on a paving crew when the I-35 Bridge collapsed – and they would have much preferred to have been repairing or replacing it, than patching it.

We also understand politics. It will take consideration of every option and options not yet considered to solve this problem.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act was very good progress in allocating significant investment in building our country, and we deeply appreciate the Obama Administration's leadership on that, which put hundreds of thousands of men and women back to work and kept more from losing work.

It was the right medicine, but not enough to be a cure.

First steps must be addressing the crisis before us, such as replenishing the Highway Trust Fund, finally reauthorizing investment in water resources, taking care of our school facilities and accelerating nuclear power sources.

Build America 2010 will focus on our huge national challenge and reignite the spirit that ensures our country is up to that challenge.

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