



December 14, 2009

Locke Considering Business Forum "To Do" List For Economic Future

Commerce Secretary Gary Locke said Monday that there is broad agreement between the Obama Administration and a group of economic leaders that have developed a "to do list" of items to bring the U.S. economy back to health.

Speaking with Ford Motor Company CEO Bill Ford, who was among the business leaders who developed the list, Locke said that the suggestions were very helpful and largely aligned with the President's goals.

"They presented a 'to do list' that is very helpful and something that I told them I will personally bring to the President and Vice President's attention in the next few days," he said. "The first thing that really struck me when I looked this list was just how much the priorities that Bill ... presented dovetail with what the administration is already trying to do."

He added, "We may not all have the same strategies to solve the problems, but we're all looking to get to exactly the same place: an American economy firing on all cylinders again and creating good jobs at good wages."

Locke noted that among the key priorities of the list, which was developed at a national summit convened by the Detroit Economic Club, was the creation of a national energy policy with a clear method of addressing carbon dioxide, developing a national manufacturing strategy and increasing investment in the research and development of energy efficient green technologies.

"These are all very smart sensible things and we are actively committed to actively giving them a good hearing and getting them enacted," he said. "We don't care if the ideas come from Democrats or Republicans, from Arizona or Michigan, from business or labor."

He added, "If it can work, if it can grow sustainable jobs, this administration wants to know about it."

Locke noted that he would be on a conference call Tuesday with the National Manufacturing Council to solicit additional ideas for how the government could support

that "crucial" sector of the economy.

Ford said that he was struck in crafting the report at the unanimity in the business community about the goals.

"We in the business community would very much like to work in partnership with our government on big national issues ... and to really, as the Secretary said, to drive clarity in to where we're headed as a nation and where our business community is also going," he said.

He added, "It's all about moving America forward, and yes, clarity and certainty are something that our businesses do want."

Locke cited as an example the American businesses he'd met with at the ongoing Copenhagen climate talks recently, all of whom were urging the U.S. Congress to swiftly pass a law addressing carbon emissions.

"They want that certainty," he said. "The business community may have different ideas about what they would like to see in that energy policy bill, but the sooner we pass one, the sooner the Congress enacts one, then they will have that certainty."

He added, "So many companies are saying right now, and people in the investment community are saying that they're sitting on the sidelines, not doing anything because there is no clear policy of the United States."

by RTT Staff Writer

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