

**ECONOMICS
HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS
DUE FRIDAY, MARCH 27, 2009**

**I. First Address to Congress – President Barack Obama
brings a message of challenge and hope**

By Laura Leigh Davidson | February 25, 2009



President Barack Obama spent his first five weeks in office delivering very serious and sometimes stressful news.

He has crisscrossed the country speaking to citizens about the nation's complicated housing, banking, and unemployment problems. He convinced many lawmakers that the country's economic crisis is so dire that they had no choice but to pass his \$787 billion stimulus package.

In his first speech to a joint session of Congress on Tuesday, he once again talked about the historic challenges facing the country. But the President also encouraged the American people to be optimistic.

"The answers to our problems don't lie beyond our reach," Obama said. "What is required now is for this country is to pull together, confront boldly the challenges we face, and take responsibility for our future once more."

The President said there are "three areas that are absolutely critical to our economic future: energy, health care, and education."

Obama laid out several ways in which Americans can take control of their futures through education. He asked citizens to commit to at least one year of higher education or career training. He issued a challenge to make America the country with the highest number of college graduates in the world by 2020.

Obama also advised parents take a more active role in their children's education.

"[There is] no policy that can substitute for a mother or father who will attend those parent/teacher conferences, or help with homework after dinner, or turn off the TV, put away the video games, and read to their child," he said.

But his strongest words of encouragement were for kids who might be considering giving up on school.

"Dropping out of high school is no longer an option," he said. "It's not just quitting on yourself, it's quitting on your country—and this country needs and values the talents of every American."

To illustrate his "don't quit" message, the President invited eighth-grader Ty'Sheoma Bethea to attend his address to Congress in person.

Fourteen-year-old Ty'Sheoma decided that it was "time for her to get involved" in helping her school after the President announced \$100 billion for education in the new economic recovery package.

She wrote a letter to Obama and to South Carolina lawmakers, asking for part of that money to help rebuild her school in Dillon, South Carolina.

In her letter she described J.V. Martin Junior High School's leaky roof and out-of-order bathrooms, part of a long list of problems plaguing the 103-year-old school.

Ty'Sheoma said repairing the school would also make students and parents "feel better" about the quality of education at J.V. Martin.

"We are just students trying to become lawyers, doctors, [members of Congress] . . . , and one day President," she wrote. "We can make a change to not just the state of South Carolina, but also the world. We are not quitters."

And that is the heart of the message President Obama delivered to all Americans Tuesday night.

"If we confront without fear the challenges of our time and summon that enduring spirit of an America that does not quit," he said, "then someday years from now, our children can tell their children that this was the time when we performed . . . something worthy to be remembered."

II. Writing Assignment

The Economic Recovery Act has provided the federal Department of Education with a lot of money to give to states to spend on school improvements. Explain what the opportunity cost of such a decision could be, and outline the incentives President Obama has to make the investment in education rather than other national priorities and interests. (50-75 words)