

**Statement of
Gina M. Raimondo
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce**

**Before the
Senate Committee on Appropriations**

**“The American Jobs Plan: Infrastructure, Climate Change, and Investing in Our Nation’s
Future”**

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Chairman Leahy, Vice Chairman Shelby, and members of the committee – it is an honor to come before you today to discuss the American Jobs Plan.

The American Jobs Plan puts forward historic public investments necessary to ensure every American has the opportunity to get a decent, well-paying job. Investments that are critical to ensure that we build back better and more equally for everyone. At its core, the American Jobs Plan is about investing in American competitiveness, strengthening our workforce, rebuilding infrastructure, and leveling the playing field for American workers. In the plan, the President proposes strategic investments in infrastructure, manufacturing, workforce development, the care economy and combatting the effects of climate change at the scale necessary to reach every single community in America. Additionally, the President’s plan calls for significant investments in school construction, which I know is important to this Committee, and something I was very proud to work on with Senator Reed during my time as Governor.

I can tell you from experience that investments like this work. When I became Governor of Rhode Island we had the highest unemployment rate in the country. During my administration, we made infrastructure and workforce investments like those this package calls for, and before the COVID-19 pandemic, Rhode Island had the lowest unemployment rate in a generation.

As Commerce Secretary, my job is to do everything I can to help American businesses create well-paying jobs for American workers, enable American businesses of all sizes to compete, and empower a more equitable economy. In my first weeks as Secretary, I have spent a lot of time talking with business leaders about what we need to do to be more competitive worldwide – and business leaders agree that we must invest in broadband, supply chains, manufacturing, research and development, and our workforce.

We need transformational investments in broadband to ensure that all Americans finally have access to affordable, reliable, high-speed Internet service. During the pandemic we have seen that high-speed broadband service is not a luxury, but a necessity for jobs, education, and healthcare. Yet, by one definition, more than 30 million Americans live in areas where there is no broadband infrastructure that provides minimally acceptable speeds. Due to systemic marginalization, millions of Americans who are disproportionately people of color, low-income, older, disabled, or residents of rural communities lack access to high-speed broadband service.

And, in part because the United States has some of the highest broadband prices among OECD countries, millions of Americans can't use broadband internet even if the infrastructure exists where they live. The American Jobs Plan proposes a historic investment of \$100 billion to bring broadband service to every American. This investment would allow those people to more fully participate in the modern economy and access job opportunities and training.

We also need to strengthen our supply chains so that we can make more critical goods in America and put more people to work rather than outsourcing. The American Jobs Plan calls for \$50 billion to support production of critical goods and to create a new office at the Department of Commerce that will monitor domestic industrial capacity. This office will incentivize manufacturers to maintain a robust domestic supply chain; and support manufacturers in vulnerable supply chains, such those for the automotive, machinery, energy, and aerospace industries.

One critical industry that demands our immediate attention is the semiconductor industry. Semiconductors are the building blocks of our future economy; yet today, we are experiencing a global chip shortage that is hurting businesses in every sector of our economy, including the auto industry. The American Jobs Plan supports the \$50 billion investment in semiconductor manufacturing and research, as called for by Congress in the bipartisan CHIPS Act. This funding will strengthen and secure our domestic semiconductor supply chain and create tens of thousands of middle-class jobs.

Our nation is also falling behind its biggest competitors with regard to basic investments in research and development, manufacturing, and training. The American Jobs Plan would provide the National Institute of Standards and Technology, or NIST, \$14 billion to bring together industry, academia, and government to advance these areas. Under the American Jobs Plan, NIST will quadruple funding for the Manufacturing Extension Partnership, also known as MEP, and expand Manufacturing USA. These investments in proven programs that make U.S. industry more competitive will further incorporate minority-owned and rurally located small- and medium-sized enterprises in technological advancement. With additional resources, NIST will also expand capabilities in emerging technologies such as advanced communication, quantum information science, engineering biology, and artificial intelligence.

In addition to this NIST funding, the American Jobs Plan also calls on Congress to provide additional funding for research and development that spurs innovation and job creation, including in rural areas. The American Jobs Plan will invest \$40 billion in upgrading research infrastructure in laboratories across the country, including brick-and-mortar facilities and computing capabilities and networks. These funds would be allocated across the federal research and development agencies.

The changes in the American economy, many of which have been accelerated by the pandemic, are challenging for millions of Americans who recognize that they need additional training to more fully participate in our economy. We cannot improve our competitiveness without investing in our people. The American Jobs Plan calls for bold investments in our workforce. It will spur targeted, sustainable, economic development in places like the Appalachian region that have been affected by changes in energy production, and communities in the Midwest that have

been impacted by manufacturing declines. Furthermore, it will expand job training opportunities across the nation. The American Jobs Plan makes the investments necessary to ensure that we will be there to provide high-quality, demand-driven, affordable job training to any American seeking opportunities to increase the knowledge and training they bring to a job.

Finally, the American Jobs Plan will help us maximize the resilience of land and water resources to protect communities and the environment. President Biden's plan will protect and, where necessary, restore nature-based infrastructure – our lands, forests, wetlands, watersheds, and coastal and ocean resources. Families and businesses throughout the United States rely on this infrastructure for their lives and livelihoods.

The American Jobs Plan puts forth bold, necessary investments in America. It's time for us to make bold investments to make it easier for our companies to be more competitive globally, to create tens of millions of jobs, and to position the United States to outcompete China and other foreign competitors. It's time for us to make bold investments so it is easier for the average American to get a decent job and get the training necessary to more fully participate in our economy. It's time to make bold investments in America.

I look forward to working with all of you on the American Jobs Plan. I am happy to take your questions.