



**National
Urban League**

To Be Equal #21

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National Urban League Tackles Biggest Crisis in America – Unemployment

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“Too often, our politics aren't focused on the same things you are. Working hard. Supporting your family and your community. Making sure your kids have every chance in life.” President Barack Obama

If you've been watching the news, you've probably noticed there's no shortage of scandals or manufactured crises coming out of Washington these days. But the biggest crisis of all – the epidemic of double-digit unemployment and the huge gulf of economic disparities that continue to plague millions of Americans -- seems to be attracting little attention. This week, the National Urban League is shifting the nation's focus back to the jobs crisis, not by reciting gloomy and well-worn statistics, but by putting a comprehensive solution on the table.

On Monday in Cleveland, the National Urban League launched one of the most ambitious economic rescue missions in our history. “Jobs Rebuild America: Educate, Employ, Empower” is a \$100 million public-private-nonprofit partnership aimed at putting America back to work and targeting communities where help is needed most. Using a comprehensive community development approach to the nation's employment and education crises, this initiative brings together federal, corporate and non-profit resources to create economic opportunity in 50 U.S. cities through the Urban League affiliate network. The program consists of both community investments and grassroots legislative advocacy.

The campaign's five-year, \$100 million community investment component includes job training for youth and mature workers, college preparation, a jobs network, entrepreneurship support, small business financing and resources, and tax credits.

The campaign's grassroots advocacy component will focus on federal legislative action in support of a balanced and responsible fiscal plan as well as backing for efforts that spur job creation in hard-pressed urban communities. This includes our long-standing support for the passage of the Urban Jobs Act, co-sponsored by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and Congressman Chaka Fattah, and for the Project Ready STEM Act, sponsored by Congresswoman Marcia Fudge.

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We stood with Acting Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor Seth Harris, Cleveland Mayor Frank G. Jackson, Cuyahoga County Executive Edward FitzGerald and Urban League of Greater Cleveland President Marsha Mockabee to kick-off the Jobs Rebuild America campaign. As a designated Jobs Rebuild America market, the Urban League of Greater Cleveland received \$950,000 in community investment competitive grants for three signature National Urban League programs – the Urban Youth Empowerment Program, the Entrepreneurship Center program and Project Ready: Post Secondary Success Program. This funding will help the affiliate expand existing programs and introduce new ones to better serve the needs of the local community, including the design of a new 21st Century workforce development system to reach thousands of job seekers, while targeting some of the most vulnerable unemployed.

Since the start of the Great Recession, Urban League affiliates in Ohio and across the nation have served as economic first responders for communities devastated by job loss. For the Jobs Rebuild America campaign, we have put together an expanded coalition of public and private partners who have pledged their expertise and resources. They include the U.S. Departments of Labor, Justice and Treasury and more than 20 major corporations.

As America faces the lowest labor force participation rate in almost 35 years and unacceptably high urban unemployment, creating jobs and economically viable communities must involve all of us working together, including the government, corporate and non-profit sectors. It's time to shift from the debate about the problem of unemployment to taking concrete action to solve it. National Urban League affiliates and our Jobs Rebuild America coalition are primed to do just that.

For a detailed description of the Jobs Rebuild America initiative and a full list of cities and coalition partners, visit www.jobsrebuildamerica.org.

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