

Our Best Days Can Be Ahead Of Us

by Richard Trumka

(NAPSA)—Our economy is slowly rebounding from its collapse but it's still far from healthy.

We are experiencing a whole generation of high unemployment, and young people who expected more for their hard work are deferring their dreams. This generation is not building the employment histories and work experience it needs to succeed.

In the face of high unemployment and slow growth, out-of-touch Republicans are throwing tantrums and threatening to harm our economy through a series of manufactured crises. They want Democrats to agree to cut Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare, cutting the safety net out from under middle-class families that have borne the brunt of decades of slow growth and diminished opportunities.

This doesn't even begin to touch on the harmful effects of sequestration, which is just a fancy word for a dumb idea. The across-the-board cuts will cost 750,000 jobs—defense facilities that aren't staffed, families with less money, closed national parks and children cut off Head Start rolls.

So what are we doing to reverse course? Nothing. We're actually moving toward more fiscal austerity, which will further weaken the economy and cost jobs.

The consensus around fiscal austerity doesn't extend to asking corporations and the richest 1 percent to share in the sacrifice. If we were really talking about things we can't afford, at the top of that list would be tax breaks for corporations that ship jobs overseas, tax breaks for hedge fund managers, more tax breaks for corporations that hide their profits outside the country, and continuing



Putting America back to work doesn't take genius, it takes courage—the courage to repeal sequester and protect our social insurance system.

tax cuts for the top 2 percent. Just closing one destructive loophole—tax cuts for corporations that ship jobs overseas—would be enough to replace almost half the job-destroying sequester.

Meanwhile, other countries invest in workers and raise wages to create demand. While we bicker over whether we can afford to invest in our crumbling roads and bridges, strengthen our education system and lead global innovation, our competitors are moving ahead.

We can turn this around—by investing in our nation, not calling for brutal cuts to vital programs; raising the minimum wage, not allowing employers to lowball U.S. workers; reforming our immigration system, not creating a second class of workers without rights to achieve the American dream; allowing workers to join together and bargain for better lives, not continuing a generation of wage stagnation. These aren't new ideas and they aren't rocket science; they just take the courage to lead.

• *Mr. Trumka is president of the AFL-CIO.*