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## The Full Employment Generation

Rep. Frederica S. Wilson  
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As veterans of the Civil Rights Movement, we can vividly remember a time when people of conscience from all over the country stood together with a common voice to fight for a common cause.

Sadly, in the decades since the 1960s, there's been no similarly-encompassing movement for social change. Private interest has too often trumped the public good.

This need not be the case. Right now, there's a cause every American -- particularly every young American -- should get behind for the sake of the nation's health, happiness, productivity, and dignity.

We need a movement for a full employment society.

Five years after the onset of the financial crisis, there are still more than eleven million people actively looking for jobs, more than four million who have been jobless for six months or longer, and seven million who have given up looking for work altogether. Pervasive and persistent unemployment has damaged Americans' health (through anxiety and lost insurance coverage), homes and neighborhoods (through mass foreclosures), and lifelong career prospects (because of lost skills and discrimination against the long-term unemployed).

But this is not only about jobless people.

When unemployment falls, business owners and investors have more customers able to buy more goods and services. When unemployment falls, low- and medium-income workers can bargain for higher wages.

Every American has a stake in stopping unemployment. So it's time to kindle a new movement built on a simple vision: Every American who wants to work should have the right to either employment or training.

There are simple and proven proposals to make this vision a reality. A 21st Century New Deal would establish public trusts to create work opportunities and training programs in needed areas including construction, infrastructure repair, energy efficiency, education, health care, and neighborhood renovation. The Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment and Training Act, sponsored by Congressman Conyers, would do just that. The American Jobs Act of 2013, sponsored by Congresswoman Wilson, would stop Congress' reckless budget cuts while establishing incentives for hiring the long-term unemployed and creating new opportunities for educators, first responders, and medical researchers.

Some of our conservative colleagues in Congress might call this approach "big government." To the contrary, we know it's the way to optimize free-market capitalism. When every person is trained, working, earning a salary, and contributing to the tax base, we have less need for government assistance and higher levels of consumer demand and investment. We therefore have less debt and more economic growth.

On Thursday, we will be hosting two brilliant thinkers -- Jared Bernstein, the former Chief Economist to Vice President Biden, and Dean Baker, one of the first economists to warn of the

stock and housing bubbles that led to the Great Recession -- to talk about the future of a full employment agenda for America.

If you're in Washington on November 21, we invite you to join the conversation at 10:30 a.m. in Room 2226 of the Rayburn House Office Building on Capitol Hill.

Building a full employment society is a prerequisite for building a happier, healthier, and more productive nation. But it won't come easy.

It will take a movement.