

Remarks to Business Round Table, SelectUSA

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Commerce Secretary Gary Locke Remarks at Business Roundtable, SelectUSA event

Thank you for the kind introduction. And I want to thank the Business Round Table for hosting us this morning. It's great to be here.

If the Senate confirms me as the next Ambassador to China, it may be a while before I get back this way, so let me use this opportunity to say it's been a pleasure to work with all of you.

Last month, General Motors announced it was investing \$2 billion in new plants, creating 4,000 jobs: great news for the eight states where the facilities will be located, for the local and state economies and for the new employees.

We need more announcements like that.

Even though the economy is growing, even though it's created more than two million jobs over the past 15 months, there are still too many people looking for work.

Jobs are a top priority for President Obama and this administration. And new business investment, both domestic and foreign, creates and supports American jobs.

That's why we are here today launching SelectUSA.

SelectUSA is the first federal government-wide program aimed at aggressively attracting and retaining business investment—and the jobs that come with it.

And it's a direct result of this administration's willingness to listen to the concerns of the business community and act on what we hear.

Thankfully, this initiative will have a great product to sell. Despite recent economic troubles, America remains a top investment destination and great place to do business.

- The American workforce is the best educated, most productive, and most innovative in the world.
- Most major investment indicators rank the U.S. at or near the top, with strong intellectual property protections and fluid capital markets, and,

- With more than 300 million people and the largest economy in the world, the U.S. is the most important market for any company.

We've been open to, and welcomed, the \$2.3 trillion of FDI stock in America.

This investment supports more than 5 million jobs for Americans who are directly employed by foreign companies throughout the 50 United States.

But in recent years, the global race to attract and retain new business investment has gotten tighter.

In 2008, the United States attracted 18 percent of total global investment, down from 25 percent just over a decade ago. Returning to the Clinton-era levels would mean up to \$125 billion dollars in new investment in the U.S. at current world totals. And that will mean more jobs.

Some of this investment decline is the inevitable result of companies wanting to move closer to consumers in fast-growing developing economies like China, India, and Brazil.

But the United States also hasn't been aggressive enough in competing for new investment. More and more often, America finds itself competing on a 21st century playing field using a 20th century playbook.

The U.S. is the only developed economy in the world without a robust national investment advocacy program.

Many states have active programs to attract investment, but they are frequently competing against much better resourced foreign entities.

The United Kingdom, for example, has a \$350 million national trade and investment promotion program staffed by almost 2,000 people worldwide.

And even when contacts are made between local governments and businesses, negotiations can be stalled or derailed by federal barriers to completing the deals.

Through SelectUSA, we aim to change that. This initiative, at minimal cost to the American taxpayer, will:

- Do more to facilitate investment in the U.S. and keep jobs from going overseas—just as other countries do;
- Partner with U.S. states and cities in their efforts to boost investment here at home;
- Cut red tape for domestic and foreign firms that want to invest in, expand, or even return operations to America;
- Aggressively market the U.S. as the best place in the world to do business, using resources such as the Commerce Department's Commercial Service offices in nearly 80 countries throughout the world; And last. . .

. . . we're providing a single point of contact—SelectUSA.gov—for companies looking to do business here, with links to state and local resources, and programs that offer federal incentives.

But let me circle back briefly to the red tape point. Here's how it will work: Often times, there can be a federal-level barrier – a stalled grant or a permitting issue, for example – to completing a deal that would encourage a foreign or U.S. business to locate their operations in the United States.

SelectUSA will give governors or mayors someone to call when trouble arises—our new SelectUSA executive director Barry Johnson, who's here with us today. Please stand up, Barry.

And Barry will have a point of contact at every relevant federal agency. And that contact's job will be to get to the bottom of the hold-up and do everything possible to fix it.

I know what I've described may raise one question in particular, so I'd like to state very clearly: SelectUSA will not be advocating for one state over another. Our job will be to lend a hand when a state or city is steps away from landing a major new investment, not when multiple states are competing for one.

The only dog we have in this fight is new business investment and new jobs in America.

We'll be an important source of information. And we'll work with businesses and local and state governments to cut through red tape.

Simply put, SelectUSA's mission is to educate, facilitate, and then—hopefully—celebrate.

Because more business investment in the U.S. means more jobs for the American people, and that is the Obama administration's number one goal.