

**HAMILTON PROJECT FROM PRISON TO WORK:
OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO REENTRY EVENT
DECEMBER 5, 2008
WASHINGTON, DC**

I'm Bob Rubin, and, on behalf of all my colleagues at The Hamilton Project, I would like to welcome you to today's Hamilton Project discussion entitled "From Prison to Work: Overcoming Barriers to Reentry".

The Hamilton Project, as most of you know, was begun about three years ago to set forth an economic strategy for our country to thrive in a global economy that is undergoing a transformation of truly historic proportions. More recently, we've had a number of events discussing issues relating to the current economic situation, such as the imperative for fiscal stimulus and catalyzing mortgage renegotiation. But, for the most part, we have addressed the long term. In that respect, our view is that the United States, with its flexible and dynamic economy, has important long-term advantages in the global economy. But, to realize the potential these advantages create, we must meet our challenges, and those challenges have been our predominant focus, including health care policy, energy policy, education, reestablishing sound fiscal conditions once this crisis is passed, and much else.

To discuss those challenges, we've had periodic events, with papers that were subject to rigorous academic review and truly distinguished panels of academics, policy analysts and participants. Today's subject, prisoner reentry, is not only a serious social and moral issue, but an immensely important economic issue. As to that economic dimension, with over 2 1/2 million inmates nationwide, and hundreds of thousands of people released from prison each year, enormous gains could be had in social costs saved

and productivity increased if real progress could be made in bringing newly-released prisoners into the mainstream economy. All of you are here because you care about this issue. My own concern about prisoner reentry grew in part because of the importance of prisoner reentry to the work of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, the nation's largest community development organization, which I chair. Also, my younger son was a volunteer teacher at the Fortune Society in New York for some time, and that gave me a sense of the challenges in trying to accomplish successful prisoner reentry for many members of the released population. And it was because of all of this that I first suggested to our then Director, Jason Furman, that prisoner reentry be considered as an economic issue for The Hamilton Project.

Our program today is designed to serve two purposes: 1) provide exposure for an issue that we think is so critically important to our country and that unfortunately receives far little attention; and 2) to provide a forum for serious discussion of substantive issues with respect to prisoner reentry.

For both of these reasons, we are deeply honored to have with us Senator Jim Webb of Virginia, to deliver our keynote address on prisoner reentry. His focus in the Senate has been predominantly on national security issues, but he has engaged strongly with economic and social issues as well. In that context, he has been a champion of the 2nd Chances Act, and has used his position on the Joint Economic Committee to focus on the link between prisoner reentry and the larger economy. And, having an American political leader of Senator Webb's distinction and standing involved with prisoner reentry can contribute greatly to increasing public awareness of the importance of this issue to all Americans, no matter what their situation may be. In keeping with the practices of The

Hamilton Project, I won't go into the resume of our distinguished speaker, because it is in your materials, but I would strongly recommend you look at it: it is the resume of a deeply-committed American citizen who has now become a major political leader.

After Senator Webb's keynote address, Doug Elmendorf, the Director of The Hamilton Project, will come to the stage and moderate a Q&A session between the audience and the Senator about prisoner reentry.

Following the keynote address, we will have a Policy Roundtable. At our Roundtable, which will be moderated by Doug, Bruce Western of the Sociology Department and the Kenney School of Government at Harvard will provide an overview of his new proposal on prisoner reentry, which will be released as a Hamilton Project discussion paper. Then, a panel of experts will discuss this paper and the subject of prisoner reentry more generally.

Let me briefly introduce the members of the panel, though again, I will not go into their resumes, since those appear in your materials.

The panel is composed of the following members:

Bruce Western, who I already mentioned, Faculty member at Harvard, with his work focusing on the role of incarceration in social and economic inequality in American society.

Scott Anders, the Assistant Deputy Chief at the U.S. Probation Office of the Eastern District of Missouri, who has developed partnerships at the local, state and federal levels to assist offenders in becoming productive members of the community.

Doug Elmendorf, who will moderate the panel, is Senior Fellow of The Brookings Institution and Director of The Hamilton Project, and has served at the U.S. Treasury

Department, at the Federal Reserve Board, at the White House Council of Economic Advisors and the Congressional Budget Office.

Glenn Martin, Associate Vice President of Policy and Advocacy at The Fortune Society, a remarkable organization with a long history of helping released prisoners reintegrate into society.

And, as the final member of our panel, Michael Thomas, Prosecuting Attorney, Saginaw County, Michigan. Mr. Thomas was named 2008 Michigan Crime Victim Advocate of the Year, and is also Co-Chair of the Corrections and Reentry Committee of the National District Attorneys Association.

Our moderator, as I mentioned earlier, is Doug Elmendorf, Senior Fellow of the Brookings Institution and Director of the Hamilton Project. Doug is a highly respected economist and policy analyst who has served at the U.S. Treasury Department, the Federal Reserve Board, the White House Council of Economic Advisors, and the Congressional Budget Office. Doug has also been an exceedingly effective manager of the Hamilton Project.

This is truly a remarkable program, and, as always, let me express the appreciation of all of us to our Director, Doug Elmendorf, and to Karen Anderson, our Managing Director, for putting together this terrific program. I look forward, as I am sure all of us do, to the discussion that lies ahead. With that, it is my great honor and privilege to introduce the Honorable Jim Webb, Senator of the Commonwealth of Virginia, to begin our program.