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President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

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Dear Mr. President,

I am involved in an industry that I feel has been much overlooked. This industry is very important for a stable economy, more so then people realize – the timber industry.

Like countless industries today, my industry is seeing the worst of times. I have been an owner of a logging company for 31 years. We have no union; however, I still have offered health benefits for 29 years and 401K retirement for 12 years. I have been able to provide steady jobs and nice benefits for my employees. In the past, we have had 130 employees working, but now we are struggling to keep 80 employees. What I find interesting is your administration is focusing on providing health insurance for Americans; however, this happens to be what I will be cutting from my business budget if my business is to possibly survive. I am staring at the cold, harsh reality of going out of business in the near future. 80% of my work is gone. We are dealing with mill shut downs and mills being closed for good. As a result, this is destroying many communities who are dealing with now non-existent timber revenue short falls that have kept their schools and municipalities functioning in the past. Unemployment is growing at a record breaking rate in my industry, and it's absolutely devastating.

Another piece of this economic dilemma is the repair and replacement of essential logging equipment. Logging companies are sending equipment back to the dealers and manufactures because of expense. Logging equipment is very expensive; a typical log loader ranges from \$350,000.00 to \$450,000.00. A processor (a machine that de-limbs and cuts logs to length) is at \$500,000.00. I had to replace four log loaders and four processors this past 2 years. If these machines are not working, no profit is made, and then I can't make the payments. Can you imagine a Caterpillar dealer trying to stay afloat when their customers are returning hundreds of these machines? These machines are purpose built machines needing skilled people to run them, without them nothing can be accomplished.

The American timber industry is not a federally subsidized industry. We do not have a Davis Bacon Act, or prevailing wage jobs. We compete for skilled people because skilled people are essential for our industry's efficiency and safety. We are forced to be creative in order to operate on very thin margins. I never dreamt it would get this bad. What is around the corner has the potential to create another Great Depression.

I'm not just writing to complain of the hard times others and I are facing in this industry. I am a

concerned citizen who believes that we can help rebuild both the timber industry while also reassuring everyday Americans, like me, in this troubling time. The way I see it is while a tree is growing, opportunity is growing with it, and when it is harvested, many more are planted to take its place; from a standing tree to opening the door of a new house.

How many high-end housing developments in the U.S. are sitting dormant and wasting economic opportunity because our common, hard-working Americans cannot afford them? We need affordable housing that people, making under \$40,000 dollars a year, can afford; **simple homes** with white appliances that can bring stability and comfort. The basic, simple homes may be best for the U.S. in a time like this. Gone are the days when you could purchase a cheap home. My first house cost me only \$20,000 dollars, but today's first time home buyers don't have that opportunity. Instead people are scraping to get by, doing all they can to pay rent for cold, drafty sub par apartments or shacks (the same many that have lost their jobs and are now living in cars, tents, and trailers). Whatever happened to the American Dream?

I believe a plan could be developed to turn our industry and many others around. Wood that is grown in our American forests can build the best of these basic homes. We could put millions of people back to work like: plumbers, builders, mill workers, and hardware manufactures. There are hundreds of thousands attached to our industry just too many to list. This recession is not just an economic slump; it is a total devastation to these industries. This country can grow the trees on a sustainable cycle to build these low cost homes and still have healthy forests for animal habitat, the environment, and people to recreate and enjoy the fruits of their labor. Let's get people working instead of having them collect unemployment, or in many cases, nothing at all.

Our coastal forest biomass(woody biomass) is an abundant forest product that could be utilized as a major source of renewable energy in the northwest. Increasing the infrastructure for utilizing renewable forest biomass energy – increasing the market for forest biomass that is already available – could be a major part of the economic recovery in our region. Without the logging industry the plans to utilize biomass would not continue.

This plan needs to happen fast before many more go out of business. If we lose our generation of loggers; I worry that there will be no one to teach and mentor the next generation. In this industry, safety and efficiency are learned trades, and that will take a huge step backwards, not to mention ruin all our hard work in sustaining forests and protecting the watersheds and animal habitats. Despite popular opinion, loggers are stewards of the land and are the truest and largest group of environmentalists; this is because we care. I proudly abide by the Oregon Forest Practices Act (1971).

The loss of these jobs and the fiscal impact because they are gone is pressing. An average logger makes \$60,000.00 plus another \$10,000.00 each for medical benefits. That is a \$7,800,000.00 payroll deficit if I go bankrupt. I also employ employee sub-contractors which would be another \$2,200,000.00. This is the impact of just one logging company. Image all the others already gone!

We are not asking for money. We are only asking for your administration to invest in a program designed for building affordable homes to better create the American dream. Our industry is a proud bunch. We want to work for our money and if done right, the federal government and citizens of this land will come out ahead.

I'm sending you a DVD of AXMEN, a reality series currently airing on the History Channel; some of it is nonsense, but it also may educate. It has helped millions of people understand the timber industry

better and we now have millions of fans that respect us. I apologize for the foul language; we made an effort in season 2 to watch our mouths. I guess you can be glad that we don't work at the White House. I'm also sending coloring books for your girls. Children are our biggest fans.

Respectfully yours,

Jay Browning
Known as the AXMAN