Obama Woos Autoworkers, AFL-CIO

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WASHINGTON (AP) — Going before groups of autoworkers and union members, President Barack Obama is trying Tuesday to assure blue-collar audiences that the economy is coming back — and that his administration deserves credit for saving some of their jobs.

Obama is scheduled to meet with workers at the General Motors Lordstown assembly plant near Youngstown, Ohio, where GM recently was able to start a second production line because of demand prompted by the federal Cash for Clunkers program.

Later, the president addresses the AFL-CIO convention in Pittsburgh, where he will urge the nation's largest labor union to support his health care overhaul.

"We didn't come here (to Washington) just to respond to crises; we came here to address America's prosperity in the future, and I think that's what he'll outline," White House spokesman Robert Gibbs told reporters Monday, previewing the president's message.

Obama planned to leave Washington early Tuesday morning for a quick trip to the Lordstown plant, in the economically depressed Mahoning Valley in northeastern Ohio. He is expected to tell a crowd of GM workers that Washington programs are putting workers back on the job.

Demand from the temporary Cash for Clunkers program — which offered up to $4,500 for drivers to trade in gas guzzlers for more fuel-efficient models — allowed GM to restart a second shift at the Lordstown plant, bringing about 1,000 people back to work making the compact Chevrolet Cobalt.

Next year, the Lordstown plant will start building the Chevrolet Cruze, another compact vehicle.

In Pittsburgh, Gibbs said, Obama planned to tell AFL-CIO members how his health care proposals would help repair an economy that is inching toward double-digit unemployment.

The events are designed to be heavy on working-class appeal in hopes of boosting the White House's credentials with the middle-class voters so crucial to the president's economic agenda.

Obama wraps up his daylong trip at a fundraiser for Pennsylvania Sen. Arlen Specter in Philadelphia. He is expected to tell donors that Specter, who earlier this

year switched from the GOP to the Democratic party, is crucial for pushing through a White House agenda that seems to have lost steam in recent weeks.

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