

# Obama Continues Jobs Campaign: Clean Coal, Biofuels

Philip Elliott, Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama is meeting with governors from coal-producing states, hoping to earn their support for a languishing energy bill and to bolster his image as a leader willing to work with Republicans as well as Democrats.

Obama planned to announce on Wednesday new steps to increase the role of biofuels in powering the nation and to release a report detailing how Washington could increase investments in green technologies, an administration official said. The president was also expected to discuss so-called clean coal technologies, said the official, who spoke ahead of the announcement only on condition of anonymity.

Many pieces of those proposals were likely to win Republican support on Capitol Hill, where GOP allies have been elusive for a Democratic White House looking to pass controversial cap-and-trade legislation that would limit the nation's emissions. Wednesday's plan also was likely to find support from GOP governors in states rich in coal and corn, which can be used to produce ethanol.

Republican Govs. Jim Douglas of Vermont, Bob Riley of Alabama and Mike Rounds of South Dakota were scheduled to meet with Obama and Vice President Joe Biden at the White House.

Energy has served as a major plank of the president's domestic agenda, finding places on his travel schedule, in his speeches and in his budget proposal released on Monday. In that plan, Obama's team called for tangible accomplishments that Democrats can champion as they head into a 2010 campaign season that has become more perilous since Republican Scott Brown won a special election to replace the late Sen. Edward M. Kennedy.

"Well, you're not going to get any argument from me about the need to create clean energy jobs," Obama said Monday in a YouTube forum. "I think this is going to be the driver of our economy over the long term. And that's why we put in record amounts of money for solar and wind and biodiesel and all the other alternative clean energy sources that are out there."

The president added: "In the meantime, though, unfortunately, no matter how fast we ramp up those energy sources, we're still going to have enormous energy needs that will be unmet by alternative energy. And the question then is, Where will that come from?"

That was a question Obama asked a group — led by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, Energy Secretary Steven Chu and Environmental Protection Agency Lisa Jackson — to explore.

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Officials said their recommendations would build on some \$786 million allocated for environmental projects ranging from ethanol research to pilot programs at biorefineries. The plans also would mesh with Obama's budget proposal, which called for ending oil and gas subsidies, a move that could save \$36.5 billion over a decade.

The Obama budget proposal, meanwhile, would retrofit 1.1 million housing units to improve energy efficiency through next year and increase batteries for plug-in hybrid vehicles to 500,000 a year by 2015. Both are examples of a tangible program that could help residents' pocketbooks and Democrats' chances at the ballot box.

Obama's political team is already making that case. He toured a company that produces energy-efficient light bulbs in Nashua, N.H., on Tuesday and late last month visited an Ohio community college that trains students to work on wind turbines. He has also been talking up the energy sector's potential to move out-of-work Americans off unemployment rolls.

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