Obama To Tout Manufacturing As Economic Stimulus

Erica Werner, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama will tout manufacturing as a key to America's economic success during a trip to Iowa, as he seeks to counter criticism of his policies by Republican presidential candidates who have descended on the state.

The trip Tuesday is Obama's first to Iowa since announcing his re-election campaign earlier this year. The White House insists the stop will be about the economy, not politics, though they are emphasizing Obama's ties with the state that jumpstarted his presidential bid with a victory in the 2008 caucuses.

"Iowa is clearly a special place for the president," White House deputy communications director Jen Psaki said. "He spent a significant amount of time there and really got to know a lot of people across the state when he was running."

Obama will tour the Alcoa Davenport Works Factory, an aluminum-producing company, then speak with workers. The White House says the company's products are exported around the world, and are produced by highly skilled workers who earn wages higher than the national average.

The stop is part of Obama's effort to promote job-creation in the midst of an economic slowdown that has reduced hiring and weakened his job approval standing with the public. After last month's weak unemployment report showed an uptick in the jobless rate to 9.1 percent, the White House is warily eyeing the release of fresh jobs numbers Friday.

The White House sees a resurgence in the U.S. manufacturing industry as one way to create jobs and stay competitive in the global marketplace. Last week, Obama announced a $500 million joint effort by industry, universities and the federal government to help reposition the United States as a leader in cutting-edge manufacturing.

"We have not run out of stuff to make. We've just got to reinvigorate our manufacturing sector so that it leads the world the way it always has, from paper and steel and cars to new products we haven't even dreamed up yet," Obama said Friday during a stop in Pittsburgh.

In Iowa, the first state in the nation to have its say in the race for the Republican presidential nomination, Obama's message will come up against the criticism of Republican presidential candidates, who say his economic policies have failed to put the country on a path toward growth and prosperity.

"Mr. President, your policies haven't worked. Spending our way out of this recession hasn't worked," Rep. Michelle Bachmann said Monday in Waterloo, Iowa, where she officially announced her run for the White House.

Former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, who has not said whether she will run for president, will be in Iowa on Tuesday for the screening of a documentary about her.

Another Republican presidential candidate, Mitt Romney, accused the Obama administration on Monday of jeopardizing the very manufacturing jobs the Democratic president plans to promote when he visits the Iowa aluminum plant.

Romney, the former governor of Massachusetts, said a lawsuit filed by the National Labor Relations Board against Boeing could stifle jobs at Alcoa in Iowa, which provides materials for the airline manufacturer's 787 Dreamliner.

"This Boeing decision in South Carolina sent shockwaves across the nation and, if allowed to stand, will result in American job losses and I think you can be sure there will be some losses in Iowa as well as other states," Romney said in an Associated Press interview.

Alcoa spokesman Mike Belwood said the labor board's battle with Boeing over the South Carolina plant will not have an impact on employment at Alcoa's eastern Iowa plants, which produce aluminum lithium plate used to make structural components of the Dreamliner.

The labor board alleges that Boeing built a second Dreamliner plant in South Carolina to retaliate against union workers in Washington for striking and to discourage future strikes. It is illegal for companies to retaliate against workers for exercising their right to strike. South Carolina has less stringent union laws than Washington, where Boeing's other Dreamliner plant is located.

Romney, in his second bid for the Republican presidential nomination, is blaming Obama for the sluggish economy and touting himself as the best able to take on Obama.

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