In Iowa, Obama touts election-year energy plan

KEN THOMAS - Associated Press - Associated Press

President Barack Obama is returning to Iowa, seeking support for an election-year agenda to encourage renewable energy along with a more immediate prize: the state's up-for-grabs voters.

Obama was pushing Congress to support clean energy tax incentives, part of his congressional "to-do list" that he contends could help bolster the economy. The president has tried to portray congressional Republicans as obstructing his ideas to create jobs and said Republican challenger Mitt Romney would follow their lead.

The president was stopping in Iowa on Thursday after attending fundraisers in Colorado and California, returning to the state that launched his presidential campaign in 2008 and could play a pivotal role in whether he gets a second term. Iowa is a prime general election target for Romney, who narrowly lost the state's caucuses but expects to compete for the state's six electoral votes.

Obama was visiting TPI Composites in Newton, Iowa, a manufacturer of wind turbine blades that employs about 700 workers in a community that once served as headquarters for appliance maker Maytag Corp.

The president plans to urge Congress to renew the federal production tax credit for the wind industry, which is set to expire at the end of the year, and expand a tax credit that supports clean energy manufacturing.

Obama's "to-do list" includes a number of economic initiatives that the president has pushed previously, aiming to help manufacturers, strapped homeowners and veterans.

Republicans say the renewable energy tax credits have failed to spur the job creation that Democrats once promised and more concrete steps — like removing government barriers to energy production — would have a greater impact on the economy.

Obama will cap the day with a grass-roots event at the Iowa State Fairgrounds — the site of the annual state fair, where Romney declared last year that "corporations are people" when confronted by a heckler. Democrats called it a gaffe that showed Romney was aligned with big business.

Obama was starting his day with a private fundraiser in northern California, his third fundraiser over two days in Silicon Valley.

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