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## **Obama blasts GOP critics over stalled stimulus legislation**

**By Jon H. Harsch**

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Speaking Thursday evening to House Democrats gathered in Williamsburg, Virginia for their three-day annual retreat, President Barack Obama blasted critics of his stimulus legislation. Just before the President spoke, a contentious Senate debate on the bill ended without a vote when Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) called off his threat to continue through the night, saying "I think staying here later tonight would not benefit us." Reid, however, said he remains hopeful that the Senate will vote tomorrow.

Obama's message to Republicans was "Don't come to the table with the same tired arguments and worn ideas that helped to create this crisis." Interrupted by frequent applause, the President continued by explaining "We are not going to get relief by turning back to the very same policies that in the last eight years doubled the national debt, and threw our economy into a tailspin. We can't embrace the losing formula that says only tax cuts will work for every problem we face, that ignores critical challenges like our addiction to foreign oil, or the soaring cost of health care, or falling schools and crumbling bridges and roads and levees. I don't care whether you're driving a hybrid or an SUV, if you're headed for a cliff, you've got to change direction. That's what the American people called for in November and that's what we intend to deliver."

Answering the Republican charge that his stimulus bill instead is a "spending" bill, Obama said "That's the whole point." Saying that the best stimulus by definition is spending, he said that with the U.S. economy on track to see spending drop by \$1 trillion in 2009 and another \$1 trillion in 2010, a massive government spending bill is necessary "to fill that lost demand." Regarding one specific item that Republican critics and the media have highlighted, \$600 million for hybrid cars for the federal fleet, Obama asked "Why wouldn't we want to do that? That creates jobs for people who make those cars, it saves the federal government energy, it saves the taxpayers energy."

Obama defended money for states too, explaining this will mean states won't have to "lay off firefighters and teachers and police."

The President's final defense of his stimulus bill was that "this plan will begin to end the tyranny of oil in our time. It doubles our capacity to generate alternative sources of energy, like wind and solar and biofuels and it does it in three years. It saves taxpayers

billions of dollars. It makes federal buildings more efficient. It saves the average working family hundreds of dollars on their energy bills. After decades of empty rhetoric, that's the down payment that we need. . . we can work hard to make sure that we've got jobs all across America, and energy independence all across America, and we will not stop until we deliver. . .”

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