

Obama urges end of partisanship, hopes for better economy

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President Barack Obama held a press conference Friday from the East Room of the White House, targeting the economic and political problems that face not only the country but his administration as well.

Obama's opening statement focused on the different economic perspectives splitting the Democratic and Republican parties, saying their views do not exactly coincide.

"Instead of tax cuts for millionaires, we believe in cutting taxes for middle-class families and small-business owners," he said. "Instead of letting corporations play by their own rules, we believe in making sure that businesses treat workers well and consumers friendly."

Obama exemplified the fracture in political views between Democrats and Republicans by noting a Republican blockade on the Small Business Jobs Act. He said the bill would allow small businesses to hire more employees and receive tax cuts, which would allow for much-needed job creation.

"This will help small businesses upgrade their plants and equipments and will encourage large corporations to get off the sidelines and start putting their profits to work in our economy," he said. "And I'm proposing that all American businesses should be allowed to write off all the investments they do in 2011."

Obama said the first step is to end a month-long standoff between a select few of partisan Republicans, which continues to hinder the passing of the bill.

"I realize there are plenty of issues in Washington where people of good faith simply disagree in principle," he said. "This should not and is not one of those issues."

Dean of the School of Management and Labor Relations David Finegold said the bill being held up in the U.S. Senate would provide the job creation the country desperately needs.

"I think right now the high rate of unemployment is one of the biggest challenges we face as a country, and

I think it's a shame we're not doing more to try and address it," he said. "I think both tax cuts and also the \$50 billion proposed infrastructure investment are good measures in that direction."

Finegold said since coming into office, Obama's administration faced opposition from the Republican minority on almost every single policy.

"It's interesting that even though Americans seem to be very concerned about unemployment from the polls, the Republicans are doing well in polls with their blocking strategy," he said.

The Small Business Jobs Act is not the only bill looking to improve the nation's economy and unemployment rate, Finegold said, connecting the proposed goals of the bill with the \$50 billion investment in the nation's infrastructure.

"It is clearly designed to create jobs by including people in infrastructure projects," he said. "But it is also an effort to address what I think all the researchers and both parties who are not on the very extreme side agree is a huge infrastructure problem we have."

In recent years, a shift occurred in the amount of gross domestic product the nation spent on infrastructure, decreasing from 10 percent to only 2 percent of GDP, Finegold said.

Associate Director of the Eagleton Institute of Politics John Weingart agreed with Finegold on the resistance of the Republican Party when dealing with Obama's policies, which he said would help reinvigorate the Democratic Party.

"I think what he was trying to do was both restate and clarify his policy objectives that would be politically helpful to Democrats in November," he said. "I have no doubt he sincerely would like to see those [policies] accomplished but recognizes the bill is very unlikely to pass before Election Day."

Obama and his administration can not only fulfill their policy goals because of the Republican minority, but they are also unable to bring the necessary teamwork needed to do so, Weingart said.

"[Obama] admitted in the press conference to being frustrated that he has not been able to bring that bipartisanship atmosphere," he said. "I think the Republican Party developed a strategy of not working with the Democrats, and they have been successful at stopping a huge number of appointments that the president tried to make."

Although the Republican minority proved to be a handful to Obama's administration, the economy itself proved to be just the same, Weingart said.

"I think that the country's economic problems are proving more serious and more difficult to address than they had seemed to the Obama administration when they took office," he said. "So to say what any given policy proposal would do is a judgment call."

But Weingart said the only way to solve this economic problem is for Obama to focus on recapturing not

only American voters but members of his party as well.

“I think the key for Democrats is to try to mobilize a good percentage of voters who were so enthusiastic or at least willing to support Obama two years ago,” he said. “If the president can be as successful in energizing more Democrats, the party can probably cut its losses and win races that now it looks they might lose.”

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