

Obama faces skeptics in 3rd try for jobs

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President [Obama](#) will reveal his latest jobs plan Thursday night in a high-stakes speech to a joint session of [Congress](#), facing Republicans opposed to more deficit spending and voters who increasingly don't trust him to fix the economy.

After the president's \$825 billion plan in 2009 failed to lower the unemployment rate, and after a tax-cut compromise with the GOP last year had little impact on jobs, Mr. Obama is offering his third major plan in three years to put people back to work.

With little more than a year to go before the 2012 elections, the president has lost credibility on the economy, said Chris Edwards, an analyst on tax and budget policy at the conservative Cato Institute.

"They've tried all kinds of stuff," Mr. Edwards said. "Cash for clunkers, housing subsidies - none of it has worked. The left is a one-trick pony on the economy - spend more money."

Among the proposals the president is expected to outline are more federal spending on construction projects, an extension of unemployment benefits, another round of payroll tax cuts and more direct aid to states.

The package is expected to cost about \$300 billion; the White House has said it will be funded but hasn't said how.

Republican lawmakers say the president should focus on ideas such as cutting corporate tax rates, reducing regulations such as the Environmental Protection Agency's smog rules that Mr. Obama killed last week, and expanding oil drilling. They are scoffing at the president's argument that opponents of his plan are putting party ahead of the national interest.

"The president can attempt to blame our economic problems all he wants on his political adversaries, or his predecessors, or on natural disasters," said Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, Kentucky Republican. "The stimulus, and the economic principles it was built on, have been a failure. And that's the reason so many people are skeptical of this president's economic proposals. They don't work as advertised."

Although many features of the president's package appear dead on arrival with the GOP, House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, Virginia Republican, told reporters Wednesday that an extension of payroll tax cuts "will be part of the ongoing discussions."

Mr. Cantor said House Republicans also are willing to work with Mr. Obama on reforming unemployment benefits and giving states flexibility on highway projects. But as if to underscore their differences, Mr. Cantor announced that he and the president would appear at separate events in Richmond on Friday as Mr. Obama lobbies for his agenda in Mr. Cantor's district.

Regardless of the president's proposals, congressional Republicans will focus much of their job-creation efforts on cutting red tape. In a letter to Mr. Obama, U.S. Chamber of Commerce President Thomas Donohue said regulatory relief could "begin moving \$1 trillion-\$2 trillion in accumulated private capital off of the sidelines and into business expansion."

To exert pressure on lawmakers, Mr. Obama chose the bully pulpit of a joint session of Congress in a nationally televised address, to begin at 7 p.m. But the latest polls show that, when it comes to jobs, the president is speaking to an increasingly skeptical public.

An NBC/Wall Street Journal poll released Tuesday found that 59 percent of Americans disapprove of the way Mr. Obama is handling the economy. In an ABC poll, 62 percent disapproved. About 80 percent of Americans said they think the economy is in another recession.

Administration officials point to more than 2 million private-sector jobs that have been created in the past 18 months, while acknowledging that the job market hasn't recovered quickly enough from the recession that lasted from December 2007 to June 2009.

Although the federal government has run up trillion-dollar deficits each of the past three years, the unemployment rate is still above 9 percent nationwide. Early on, the president's economic advisers predicted that the first stimulus plan would keep the jobless rate below 8 percent.

Now, White House officials are predicting that unemployment will fall below 9 percent next year if Congress approves the president's newest package.

"It's ridiculous for the Obama administration to make another prediction," Mr. Edwards said. "Economists and politicians have a [poor] record of forecasting where the economy is going."

Factoring in the Federal Reserve's efforts to pump trillions of dollars into the economy, Mr. Edwards said, Mr. Obama has presided over \$5 trillion of stimulus since he took office. But the recovery is the slowest since World War II.

Mr. Obama's re-election likely hinges on the outcome of this latest battle with Congress. No president in the past 50 years has won a second term with the unemployment rate higher than 7.2 percent.

Mr. Obama, seeming to recognize that his proposal won't win favor with Republican lawmakers, is talking about campaigning next year on the argument that the House GOP is leading a "do-nothing" Congress.

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