

The New York Times[®]
Reprints

This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers [here](#) or use the "Reprints" tool that appears next to any article. Visit www.nytreprints.com for samples and additional information. [Order a reprint of this article now.](#)

PRINTER-FRIENDLY FORMAT
SPONSORED BY



June 2, 2010

Obama Says He'll Push for Clean Energy Bill

By **HELENE COOPER**

PITTSBURGH — President Obama said Wednesday that it was time for the United States “to aggressively accelerate” its transition from oil to alternative sources of energy and vowed to push for quick action on climate change legislation despite almost unanimous opposition from Republicans and continued skepticism from some Democrats.

Seeking to harness the deepening anger over the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico to the advantage of his legislative agenda, Mr. Obama promised to find the lagging votes in the Senate to get the climate change and energy bill passed this year. Last year, the House passed a version of the bill, which tries to address global warming by putting a price on greenhouse gas pollution and provides incentives for alternative clean energy sources.

“If we refuse to take into account the full cost of our fossil fuel addiction — if we don’t factor in the environmental costs and national security costs and true economic costs — we will have missed our best chance to seize a clean energy future,” Mr. Obama said. “The votes may not be there right now, but I intend to find them in the coming months.”

Mr. Obama’s remarks were made to a group of about 300 local business owners and economic officials at Carnegie Mellon University. He used them to reiterate his call to roll back Bush administration tax breaks for oil companies and to make a broader case for his administration’s accomplishments heading into an election season.

He defended what he cast as his vision of active but restrained government against a conservative limited-government philosophy that he said had proved a failure under President George W. Bush, and he criticized Republicans in Congress as obstructionists.

“From our efforts to rescue the economy to health insurance reform to financial reform, most have sat on the sidelines and shouted from the bleachers,” the president said. “They said no to

tax cuts for small businesses, no to tax credits for college tuition, no to investments in clean energy. They said no to protecting patients from insurance companies and consumers from big banks.”

Republicans shot back quickly. Even before Mr. Obama had begun his speech, [Representative Eric Cantor](#) of Virginia, the Republican whip, issued a statement saying “the president gives a good speech, but good speeches can’t improve failing policies.”

“Out-of-control Washington spending,” Mr. Cantor said, “has created a massive debt, private-sector businesspeople — small and large — are preparing for additional tax increases, and the government keeps on growing.”

Many clean-energy advocates have argued that Mr. Obama should try to take advantage of the national anger over the gulf oil spill to challenge Republicans on the climate change bill, saying that his best chance to get such a bill passed is now.

Apparently eager to seize an opportunity to take the offensive after weeks of playing defense on the oil spill, Mr. Obama suggested that he was happy to engage in a major battle for the legislation in the coming months.

He described the “inherent risks to drilling four miles beneath the surface of the earth,” to fuel the country’s dependence on oil. “We consume more than 20 percent of the world’s oil, but have less than 2 percent of the world’s oil reserves,” he said. “Without a major change in our energy policy, our dependence on oil means that we will continue to send billions of dollars of our hard-earned wealth to other countries every month, including countries in dangerous and unstable regions.”

The White House has been trying to stop the environmental disaster in the gulf, now in its seventh week, from consuming the second year of his presidency.

A day after disclosing that the federal government is conducting criminal and civil investigations of [BP](#) and other companies in connection with the spill, Mr. Obama did not directly criticize BP or the oil industry generally. Instead, he framed his agenda in positive terms, saying that the “time has come, once and for all, for this nation to fully embrace a clean energy future” and that the transition would succeed only “if the private sector is fully invested in this future.”