



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on November 30, 2011

Admin. Denies Obama Targets Swing States for “Official Business” Trips

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, which published the [exposé](#), when the President jets to Scranton, Pennsylvania, on Wednesday to promote his jobs agenda ("official business") — including a renewal of a payroll tax cut — he will log his 56th event in a swing state this year, vaulting him well ahead of President George W. Bush’s record-breaking swing-state campaign drive in 2003. Obama’s excessive campaign politicking has been a magnet for Republican criticism, as conservative politicians and pundits criticize the President for exerting more effort toward his 2012 reelection campaign than toward working to fix the nation’s high unemployment and stagnant economic growth.



The *Journal* reported:

Between Jan. 1 and Nov. 17 of his third year in office, Bill Clinton held 40 events over 24 days in the battlegrounds of his time, according to data compiled by Brendan Doherty, a U.S. Naval Academy assistant professor who is widely viewed among political scientists as an expert on presidential travel. Over that same stretch, George W. Bush held 49 events in 34 days, drawing complaints from Democrats.

Mr. Obama has surpassed his predecessors in both categories; as of Nov. 17, he attended 54 events in 11 battleground states over 42 days. "Obama has certainly ramped up the volume," said Mr. Doherty, author of a forthcoming book called "The Rise of the President's Permanent Campaign."

Doherty’s research revealed that between the dates cited, Obama has traveled 11 times to Virginia, 10 to Florida, eight to Pennsylvania, seven to North Carolina, and four times to both Ohio and Missouri. In addition, he has given about 50 interviews this year with local news outlets, the majority of which are located in swing states.

But his seemingly strategic ventures outside Washington have raised questions about not only his motives, but also the money being spent to fund his frequent excursions. Presidential travel intended for official business, such as promoting legislation — in this case, Obama’s jobs plan — is subsidized by taxpayers, while campaign events are supposed to be paid for by campaign funds. Because most of the President’s travel has been framed as "official business," taxpayers have been financing a hefty portion of the bill. But unsurprisingly, seeing that the President’s recent events have overwhelmingly been in battleground states, criticism from Republicans and taxpayers has surfaced.



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The *Journal's* article incited a skirmish Monday between the White House press corps and Press Secretary Jay Carney, as media correspondents questioned Obama's ambitious 2012 campaign strategies. Carney's main line of defense was that the President is a victim of electoral success, in that Obama's 2008 triumph converted many traditionally-Republican states into battlegrounds, which makes avoiding swing states all the more difficult.

"Now, every president who's occupied the Oval Office, just a few short minutes across the river from Virginia, travels to Virginia frequently to hold events," the Press Secretary [averred](#) during the conference. "When you look at George W. Bush's travel as president, [Virginia is] not included on this list as a swing state or a battleground state because it was not perceived to be possible that a Democrat could win it. But Barack Obama won that state, and he's made numerous visits to Virginia, just as most presidents prior to Barack Obama have made numerous visits to Virginia."

When asked as to why the President frequents "purplish" North Carolina so much more than blood-red, GOP-dominated Tennessee, Carney retorted, "He goes to red states, he goes to blue states, he goes to states that are considered battleground states — and those decisions are made for substantive reasons based on the policy issue that ... he's addressing."

Carney added that some events are scheduled a certain way because of logistical problems due to infrastructure constraints and conflicting time zones. "Proximity has a lot to do with it," he noted, referring to Virginia, Pennsylvania, and other states that are in the same time zone as D.C. "He can't always go to the mountain states or the plains states or the West Coast."

But critics argue that Obama's campaign politicking seems far too strategic, as the President took a bus tour just last month through Virginia and North Carolina, two states that could be critical in determining the 2012 presidential election. As [reported](#) by *The New American*, the visits to not only the states themselves seem strategically planned, but also the cities in the two battleground states which the "official busines" tour ventured through.

For example, why did the President spend the better part of Monday (the first day of the tour) in Asheville, N.C.? "To rev up support among white liberals and high-education migrants from the Northeast," Politico.com suggested, in its ["Political Guide"](#) to the October bus tour. And why did Obama skip over North Carolina's two biggest cities, Charlotte and Raleigh? Because he defeated former 2008 GOP candidate John McCain in those two cities by a landslide of 24 and 15 points, respectively.

After anchoring in Asheville, a liberal area surrounded by the devoutly conservative region of western North Carolina, the President moved on to Millers Creek, and then Jamestown — two smaller cities which he lost by a wide margin in 2008. Politico explained that visiting Millers Creek and Jamestown would show Carolina rural and suburban folk that Obama is not afraid to meet his opposition and that he is in strong support of the state's progressive heartland.

During the tour, a reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* asked a White House advisor why the President chose to avoid certain areas in North Carolina. "The advisor assured us," the *Times* noted, "that Obama would be back — many times — before the 2012 election."

Photo of President Obama waving from Air Force One: AP Images



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