



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on October 18, 2011

Obama Bus Tour Intersects Two Key Electoral States

President Obama is venturing to charm American voters this week during an East Coast bus tour that will intersect parts of North Carolina and Virginia. Beginning Monday, the three-day junket will traverse through suburbs, rural towns, and several cities, as the trip spans two key electoral states that could prove essential for Obama's 2012 campaign pursuits. In considering the tour's seemingly strategic route and voter-targeted audiences, observers contend that the East Coast excursion is clearly an attempt to resurrect the President's waning support support in two southern states that Republicans controlled before the 2008 election.



The tour's supposed objective is for the President to promote job creation measures by urging voters to pressure Congress to pass a series of job-creation bills. But Obama's jobs package has yet to win congressional approval, as Senate Republicans blocked the proposal last week, requesting separate votes on specific provisions in the bill over the next few weeks.

In a seemingly direct ploy for political gain, the President [accused](#) Senate Republicans on Monday of voting against putting teachers back to work and ignoring the employment needs of military veterans. Further, he derided a Republican jobs proposal which seeks to eliminate ObamaCare and abolish financial and environmental regulations that hinder American businesses from creating jobs. The GOP package calls for "dirtier air, dirtier water and less people with health insurance," Obama declared.

Included in this week's itinerary are stops at high schools, community colleges, a military base, and other places and communities that would directly benefit from Obama's \$447 jobs plan, said White House officials. Deputy Press Secretary Josh Earnest [told](#) reporters Sunday that sketching the tour as a political gambit is simply an exploitative maneuver from "people in Washington, D.C., who are eager to ascribe a political motive to everything the president does."

However, critics note that the expedition's blueprint is obviously political, as Obama's 2012 game plan will inevitably require heavy campaigning in both of these states. "The main goals for Obama in North Carolina really hold true for Virginia, too," asserted Mileah Kromer, assistant director of the Elon University Poll, whose September survey hooked the President with a 42 percent approval rating (51 percent disapproved). "First, he needs to make sure black voters, who are the core here, are as motivated as they were last time," Kromer continued, "Second, he needs to reach out to working-class whites, who[m] he's totally lost. Third, he's got to generate some kind of enthusiasm among liberals ... who are his volunteer and donor base."

In 2008, Obama captured North Carolina by an exceptionally narrow margin, winning by 14,177 votes out of more than 4.3 million votes cast — or three-tenths of 1 percent — so even a minor slip in support could furnish Obama's 2012 contender with an easy 15 electoral votes. "The challenge is that when you



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only won by 14,000 votes to begin with, you really have no margin for error," [said](#) Eric Heberlig, a political science professor at the University of North Carolina. "You lose any percentage of independent voters, you're now [in a] danger zone."

Obama's poll numbers in Virginia do not fare much better, as a Quinnipiac University [poll](#) recorded a presidential approval rating of 45 percent, with 52 percent disapproving. Further, a whopping 83 percent of Virginians are disappointed with the direction of the country. "President Barack Obama's job approval and re-election numbers remain seriously under water in Virginia," the poll [stated](#).

On Monday, Politico.com published a ["Political Guide"](#) to Obama's bus tour, detailing why each destination in some way nurtures his 2012 presidential campaign. Why did the President spend the better part of Monday in Asheville, N.C.? "To rev up support among white liberals and high-education migrants from the Northeast," Politico suggested. Obama skipped over North Carolina's two biggest cities, Charlotte and Raleigh, where he defeated former 2008 GOP candidate John McCain by a landslide of 24 and 15 points, respectively. Instead, the President anchored in Asheville, a liberal area surrounded by the devoutly conservative region of western North Carolina. *Politico* describes the incentive for Monday's first destination:

Asheville has only 80,000 people, but it's an important bastion of white progressives, an arts hub and home to a half dozen universities that were hotbeds of support during the Hope-and-Change era. As such, it's a convenient stand-in for the state's much larger progressive heartland: the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill "Triangle," a much more important basket of Obama support in 2012.

The next stop after Asheville was Millers Creek, and today the President heads to Jamestown. Some observers questioned why the President would visit these two towns, because they have small populations and he lost both cities by a wide margin in 2008. Politico expounded:

The answer? The trip gives Obama three valuable opportunities: 1) He gets to show Carolina rural/suburban folk — and a national audience — that he isn't afraid to venture where he's not very well liked. 2) He's visiting the local high school and community college, which have already dealt with teacher layoffs and might soon face more. 3) The congresswoman in Millers Creek is none other than Rep. Virginia Foxx, the Bronx-born anti-Obama GOP crusader who has railed against government spending — after defending her support for a \$500,000 federal contribution to a local teapot museum a few years back.

Also on Tuesday's agenda is the city of Greensboro, where historic turnouts by blacks were a springboard for Obama's 14,000-vote victory in North Carolina. Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.) and other African-American politicians and activists scrutinized the President's summer bus tour through the rural Midwest, because he "neglected" urban areas in America's heartland. So on Tuesday, Obama is visiting Greensboro, North Carolina's third-largest city, and considering Greensboro's demographics, Rep. Waters may offer her blessing this time around. Politico continued,

Greensboro has a 40 percent black population and a rich civil rights history that included the first major lunch counter sit-in 51 years ago and a deadly clash between the KKK and leftists three decades ago; Hampton is home to a huge military population and one of the country's most prestigious historically black colleges.

On Wednesday, the final day of the tour, the President will visit Hampton, Virginia, which also has a large black population. First Lady Michelle Obama will be accompanying the President on a visit to Langley Air Force Base, where Mrs. Obama will [announce](#) a "major private sector initiative to hire



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veterans and military spouses." Conveniently, the announcement will be made in an area that was pivotal for Obama's 2008 victory.

Photo: President Barack Obama speaks at the YMCA at the Guilford Technical Community College in Jamestown, N.C., Tuesday, Oct. 18, 2011: AP Images



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