



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on February 20, 2012

Obama Calls for Corporate Welfare During Boeing Plant Visit

In concluding his three-state, three-day tour on Friday, President Obama made a flashy appearance at Boeing's aircraft assembly plant in Washington State, where he touted the manufacturing accomplishments of the world's largest aerospace company. During the visit, the President asserted that Boeing, a top U.S. exporter, is a world-class model of an American company spurring economic growth through overseas commerce.



"So this company is a great example of what American manufacturing can do in a way that nobody else in the world can do it," Obama [told](#) a crowd of assembly workers at the Boeing plant in Everett, Washington. "And the impact of your success, as I said, goes beyond the walls of this plant. Every Dreamliner that rolls off the assembly line here in Everett supports thousands of jobs in different industries all across the country."

Many observers found the President's plant visit quite hypocritical, considering that the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) recently [threatened to close](#) the company's South Carolina plant after union workers in Washington protested that Boeing had built the new factory in a right-to-work state in reprisal against the Machinist Union strikes. The NLRB refused to dismiss the grievance until a deal was reached in December that issued bonuses and improved pension benefits for the Washington union workers.

Moreover, observers noted that Obama's past remarks targeting private jet-owners also made his visit appear rather sanctimonious, as Boeing manufactures one of the most expensive and coveted private jets on the market. The President patronized private jet-owners during a press conference last June, mentioning them on at least six occasions, each time exuding a stooping class-warfare sentiment. "I think it's only fair to ask an oil company or a corporate jet owner that has done so well," he [asserted](#), "to give up that tax break that no other business enjoys."

"I think it would be hard for the Republicans to stand there and say that the tax break for corporate jets is sufficiently important that we're not willing to come to the table and get a deal done," Obama [added](#), touting his 2011 tax plan. "You'll still be able to ride on your corporate jet; you're just going to have to pay a little more."

During Friday's appearance, the President called on Congress to continue funding the Export-Import Bank, a national export credit agency, which he claims is critical for boosting exports. "I want us to sell stuff," he declared, pledging that he would take steps to subsidize American companies to match the



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government assistance their foreign competitors enjoy. “In America, there’s always something we can do to create new jobs and new manufacturing and new security for the middle class,” Obama [added](#) in his weekly address, which was taped inside the plant. “In America, we don’t give up, we get up.”

“It’s time to stop rewarding businesses that ship jobs overseas, and start rewarding businesses that create jobs here in America,” Obama said, echoing a theme from his State of the Union address which suggested that companies need new tax incentives to incite competitive growth. “And Congress should send me that kind of tax reform right away.”

Fulfilling his role as the 2012 presidential incumbent, Obama’s visit was not without political theater, as he used Boeing’s new United Airlines Dreamliner as a backdrop for his speech. The showing far exceeded the standards of Obama’s traditional factory tour, as he delightedly navigated the company’s new aircraft and marveled at its “environmentally-conscious” features. “This is the first commercial airplane to be made with 50 percent composite materials,” he [said](#). “It’s lighter, it’s faster, it’s more fuel-efficient than any [other] airplane in its class. And it looks cool,” he said to a wave of laughter and applause.

The President also used the visit to showcase his purported success in boosting exports, an issue he underscored in his 2010 State of the Union address. The tour supplied Obama with an industrial backdrop for his manufacturing proposals, as Boeing harvests [85 percent](#) of its \$296-billion jetliner backlog from foreign buyers, making the company a buttress for Obama’s ambitious plan to double exports by 2015.

But beyond the populist sentiment the President voiced during the visit, some critics have decried the corporate welfare proposals he is calling for. Chris Chocola, president of the limited-government, free-enterprise advocacy group Club for Growth, asserted that the government aid Obama is requesting would establish a “corporate welfare slush fund” for companies with massive lobbies, such as Boeing.

“Boeing spent over \$12 million lobbying Congress last year, and in return, is getting billions of dollars in Export-Import Bank financing,” Chocola affirmed in a statement. “Congress should end the federal bank of Boeing, and instead promote more international trade through corporate tax reform and lower tariffs.”

Photo: President Barack Obama looks at the overhead compartment of a Boeing Dreamliner with Boeing employee Rick Goade while visiting a production facility a Boeing plant in Everett, Wash., Feb. 17, 2012: AP Images



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