

Obama accuses Congress of holding back US recovery
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VINEYARD HAVEN, Aug 20 – A vacationing US President Barack Obama accused Congress today of holding back the US economic recovery by blocking “common sense” measures he said would create jobs and help growth.

In remarks recorded on Wednesday on his campaign-style bus tour in Illinois and aired during his holiday in Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts, Obama said the stalled construction, trade and payroll tax bills could give a boost to the economy.

“The only thing preventing us from passing these bills is the refusal by some in Congress to put country ahead of party. That’s the problem right now. That’s what’s holding this country back,” the president said in his weekly radio address, which is also transmitted on the Internet.

Wall Street stocks have suffered four weeks of losses because of investor jitters, partly over concerns that the United States may be headed for another recession after barely growing in the first half of 2011.

With the national unemployment rate stuck above 9 per cent, Obama’s re-election hopes may hinge on his ability to convince voters he is steering the US economy the right way.

He has been criticized for taking off to Martha’s Vineyard, a wealthy island retreat near Boston, at a time when some 14 million Americans are out of work. Such breaks are typical for US presidents, and the Obamas also took vacations in Martha’s Vineyard in August of 2010 and 2009.

The White House has said the president would spend much of his nine-day absence from Washington working on the job and growth package he will unveil in an early September speech.

In today’s remarks, Obama acknowledged the country remained far from full health.

“We’re going through a tough time right now. We’re coming through a terrible recession,” he said. “So we need folks in Washington – the people whose job it is to deal with the country’s problems, the people who you elected to serve – we need them to put aside their differences to get things done.”

Republicans control the US House of Representatives and Democrats control the Senate. A bitter fight between the two parties over deficit-cutting brought the country to the edge of a debt default and sparked a credit ratings downgrade this month.

In the Republicans’ weekly address, Ohio Governor John Kasich said it was wrong for the president to stand aside and blame others for the impasse that has also affected legislation related to immigration, energy and other issues.

“Divided government is no excuse for inaction,” said Kasich, a former chairman of the House Budget Committee.

"There's just no substitute for leadership from the president of the United States," Kasich said. "It's my hope President Obama will listen to the people and partner with Republicans to get our economy back to creating jobs and producing growth."

The governor also called on conservative Republicans to show more willingness to compromise as required.

"It's just as important that Republicans not be stiff-necked about working across the aisle when important work must be done," he said, suggesting: "It's OK to compromise on policy, as long as you don't compromise on your principles." – Reuters

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