

Obama tells Democrats to brace for 'big battle'

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DES MOINES, Jan 4 — As Republicans began voting to choose a nominee to face off against him, President Barack Obama sought to rally his Democratic supporters on Tuesday by telling them he had delivered on many promises and needed another term to accomplish more.

Obama, whose path to the White House began with a win in Iowa four years ago, reminisced about that campaign with Democrats, as Republicans dominated the spotlight with congressman Ron Paul, former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney and former Senator Rick Santorum competing in a tight race in the first voting contest of the 2012 election cycle.

In a video chat with Iowans helping to lay the groundwork for his re-election bid, the 50-year-old Obama said he had "much more" grey hair now than in 2008 but he recalled the "incredible energy" of that campaign.

He said he would need the same energy and enthusiasm this year.

"It's going to be a big battle," Obama said. "I hope you guys are geared up. I'm excited."

Obama's victory in Iowa in 2008 vaulted him into the lead in the Democratic race for the presidential nomination and he went on to defeat Hillary Clinton, who had been well ahead of him in national polls earlier in the race.

Although the president does not face a Democratic challenger this time, the Obama campaign has been quietly building a large presence in Iowa in hopes of bolstering his chances in this Midwest battleground state in November's election.

The campaign has opened eight offices across the state and is setting up a large effort to make sure that likely Obama supporters go to the polls on Election Day.

In the video chat, Obama listed ending the Iraq war, passing healthcare reform and overhauling Wall Street regulations were among the promises he had kept. But he said, "We've still got a lot of work to do."

During the video session, one supporter, Roseann Cook of Coralville, Iowa, asked Obama if he still believed in his 2008 campaign slogan of "hope and change."

"In some ways, I'm actually more optimistic now than I was when I first ran because we've already seen change take place," Obama replied. But he said part of his challenge for 2012 was to remind supporters "how far we've travelled." — Reuters

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