

Romney: Obama Denying Middle Class A ‘Fair Shot’

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Associated Press

STRATHAM, N.H. — Mitt Romney launched the next phase of his presidential campaign Friday, kicking off a six-state, small-town bus tour and telling middle-class Americans that President Barack Obama hasn't given them "a fair shot."

"If there has ever been a president who has failed to give the middle class of America a fair shot, it is Barack Obama," the likely Republican presidential nominee told hundreds of people standing in the sunshine outside a farmhouse plastered with his bus tour's slogan, "Every Town Counts."

It was new attack on Obama, Romney's Democratic foe, who has repeatedly argued that it's Democrats who offer a "fair shot" to Americans who "work hard and play by the rules."

The tour is Romney's first traditional campaign swing aimed at undecided voters in a series of battleground states that will decide the presidential election. Romney is hoping to win over people who might have voted four years ago for Obama's promise of hope and change but who are now disappointed in the president.

Still, Obama overshadowed the start of Romney's bus tour as his administration announced it will stop deporting hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children. Romney ignored a reporter's question about the change in immigration policy as he shook hands with voters in New Hampshire.

In Friday's remarks, Romney told supporters they don't have to "settle for these years of disappointment and decline," instead offering a nostalgic portrait of a promising small-town America that he promised to revive.

Americans are "worried and anxious. They are tired of being tired. And they are tired of a detached and distant president who never seems to hear their voices," Romney said, as he stood on the bed of a farm's tractor trailer and read his speech from a teleprompter.

The speech, delivered from the



MATTHEW CAVANAUGH/MCT
Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney speaks at a campaign event at Scamman Farm in Stratham, New Hampshire on Friday, June 15, 2012. Mitt Romney set off Friday on a six-state campaign swing aimed at shoring up support among the white conservatives who shunned him in the Republican primaries, but are now crucial to his quest to unseat President Obama in November.

farm where he announced his presidential bid last year, was the official kick-off of the six-state bus trek aimed at swaying undecided voters living "off the beaten path" outside of America's big cities. He invoked the names of famous American writers and entrepreneurs like Mark Twain, John Steinbeck and Thomas Edison while lamenting the decline of Rust Belt cities like Detroit, Pittsburgh and Cleveland.

Obama spokeswoman Lis Smith called Romney's speech "angry and empty rhetoric" that offered "zero new solutions to grow the economy and strengthen the middle class."

Romney will spend the next five days visiting what advisers described as towns Obama forgot — but in states the president won in 2008. From New Hampshire, the tour continues to Pennsylvania, Ohio, Wisconsin, Iowa and Michigan. Still, Romney's campaign is visiting relatively friendly territory. In Pennsylvania, for example, two of the stops are in counties won by 2008 Republican nominee John McCain.

Romney's campaign has four buses plastered with a new logo — one without his "conservative, businessman, leader" tag line from the primary. He will spend each day on the bus and fly to the next

state on the tour in the evening. The former Massachusetts governor planned to roll through at least 14 small cities and towns over the five days of the tour.

It's a new mode for Romney, who kept a limited public schedule through late April, May and early June, preferring to spend his time raising money and holding a handful of public events each week. The bus tour will mix small, local venues with larger events and some untraditional campaign stops.

It will bring Romney back to the kind of retail politicking he hasn't engaged in since the early days of the Republican primary, when he campaigned in diners and coffee shops across Iowa and New Hampshire.

With that opportunity, however, comes risk. Romney sometimes ran into trouble in the more unpredictable environments. At one stop at a New Hampshire diner, for example, a gay veteran confronted him about his opposition to gay marriage.

Romney also has long faced questions about his ability to connect with the voters he meets in casual settings, and the bus tour is bound to test him again. Polls show voters personally like Obama more than they like Romney.



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