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THE PRESIDENT  IN PEORIA

'I had to come to Peoria'

President Obama cites Caterpillar layoffs as an example of need for stimulus bill



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RON JOHNSON/JOURNAL STAR

President Barack Obama speaks to Caterpillar Inc. administrators, workers and invited guests Thursday at Building HH in East Peoria, with Caterpillar equipment in the background.

Caterpillar Inc. Chairman and CEO Jim Owens, right, applauds President Barack Obama, who addressed Caterpillar workers, executives and selected guests Thursday in East Peoria.

RON JOHNSON
JOURNAL STAR



BY STEVE TARTER
OF THE JOURNAL STAR

EAST PEORIA — President Barack Obama cited Caterpillar Inc. as one of the big reasons the country needs his \$800 billion stimulus bill.

"I had to come to Peoria. You have to see how things are playing in Peoria," said the president, who stopped at Caterpillar's Building HH for a Thursday afternoon address before traveling to Springfield for a Lincoln Day celebration.

"We've lost 3.6 million jobs since this recession began — nearly 600,000 last month alone," said Obama, specifically pointing to the 22,000 layoffs an-

nounced by Caterpillar.

"What's happening at (Caterpillar) tells us a larger story about what's happening with our nation's economy — because, in many ways, you can measure America's bottom line by looking at Caterpillar's bottom line."

Speaking before 250 community leaders and guests, the president called the 22,000 layoffs that Caterpillar has announced to date "a warning sign."

"When a company as good and successful and efficient and lean and mean as Caterpillar is cutting back production and shedding jobs, that means we're

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Owens: Layoffs may not be over

Chairman says company likely will have to let more people go before hiring resumes

BY STEVE TARTER
OF THE JOURNAL STAR

EAST PEORIA — Layoffs at Caterpillar Inc. may not be over despite the recent statement by Chairman and CEO

Jim Owens that the company might recall employees with the passage of a stimulus package.

"We'll probably have more layoffs before we start hiring again," said Owens at an impromptu news conference after President Barack Obama's appearance Thursday at Caterpillar's Building HH.

Owens said the slowdown that hit Caterpillar in November has put plans on hold.

"We don't want false expectations. If we sign a stimulus bill, that doesn't mean we'll start hiring right away," he said.

Caterpillar Inc. has laid off 22,000 people worldwide in recent months, but if the recession worsens, "there may have to be more (layoffs)," said Owens.

Despite racking up record profits in 2008, "(Caterpillar) went from booming demand

to order cancellations in November," said Owens, who pledged support for Obama's stimulus bill despite calling the bill "a little light on infrastructure investment."

Recharging the global economy also will require stimulus packages from other nations, he said.

"China's (stimulus package) could have a more immediate impact," said Owens.

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Read the full text of the president's speeches in Peoria and Springfield.

View more photos online and submit your own.

See a timeline of Obama's visit to Peoria.

VIDEO REPORTS:

Hear from sightseers catching a glimpse of the motorcade.

Watch Obama's entire speech.

Caterpillar officials discuss prospect of future layoffs.

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FRIDAY THE 13TH
Today is the first of three Friday the 13ths in 2009, giving extra anxiety to those who believe in the superstition. **PAGE B1**



CAHILL OUT AS TREASURER?
District 150 sources say that the treasurer is parting ways with the district. **PAGE B1**

GETTYSBURG ADDRESS
Mark Bills Middle School students recite Gettysburg Address on 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth, joining effort to set record for most people reading aloud simultaneously. **PAGE B1**