



A MESSAGE OF UNITY



Above: President Barack Obama walks out to speak in front of about 6,600 people inside the Caven-Williams Sports Complex during a visit to Boise State University Wednesday in Boise. (Adam Eschbach/IPT) Directly below: The crowd applauds as Obama speaks. It was his first visit to Idaho as president. (Greg Kreller/IPT) Bottom: Obama greets people on the tarmac as he arrives on Air Force One at Gowen Field Air National Guard Base Wednesday in Boise. (AP Photo/Carolyn Kaster) ▶ More photos and video at idahopress.com/multimedia

President restates economic priorities to crowd in Boise State speech

By **KELCIE MOSELEY**
kmooseley@idahopress.com

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BOISE — Even 12-year-old Bella Williams acknowledged the rarity of a presidential visit to Idaho when she invited President Barack Obama to come to Boise and ski and snowboard with her.

“(Bella) wrote me a letter and she said, ‘I know what you’re thinking. Wow, what’s it like in Boise, Idaho?’ So she invited me to come visit,” Obama said.

The president addressed an enthusiastic crowd of about 6,600 people at the Caven-Williams Sports Complex on the Boise State University campus Wednesday afternoon. It was his first stop on a tour of several states after the State of the Union address Tuesday night before Congress. He headed to Kansas late in the afternoon for a similar event that will be held today.

Of course, it wasn’t just Bella’s letter that prompted the visit. Obama said he specifically targeted Idaho partly because of advanced technology efforts and women in science at BSU, but also because of Idaho’s politics.

The president referenced his first visit to Boise when he was a candidate in 2008, and said that visit helped him win more delegates, and then the Democratic primary.

“Of course, in the general election I got whupped. I got whupped twice, in fact,” he said. “... (But) that’s exactly why I’ve come back.”

He went on to hammer the point that there is no liberal or conservative America, but a United States of America — a line that harkens back to the speech he gave at the Democratic National Convention in 2004.

“And today, I know it can seem like our politics are more divided than ever. And in places like Idaho, the only ‘blue’ turf

“**I still believe that, as Americans, we have more in common than not.**”

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA



is on your field,” Obama said, referencing BSU’s football field. “The pundits in Washington hold up these divisions in our existing politics and they show, well, this is proof that any kind of hopeful politics, that’s just naive.

“But as I told you last night, I still believe what I said back then. I still believe that, as Americans, we have more in common than not.”

Please see Obama, A8

Obama

Continued from A1

Obama went on to reiterate points he made in his State of the Union address, saying he is committed to lowering tax burdens on the middle class and closing loopholes in the tax code for some corporations, making college and child care more affordable, investing in technology and more.

BSU’s efforts in technology is part of what drew the president said drew him to Boise. Prior to the speech, he toured the university’s New Product Development Lab, which develops prototypes such as a 3D-printed custom handle that would help a student with developmental disabilities open his locker by himself.

Obama also emphasized the number of women in science at BSU — something university President Bob Kustra said worked out well as they organized his visit.

“One of the people I asked to meet him with me was (former astronaut) Barbara Morgan,” Kustra said. Morgan is now an educator in residence at BSU. “So it worked out perfectly with that message.”

Mary Niland, chairwoman of the College of Western Idaho Board of Trustees, also attended the speech. Niland said Boise State officials gave CWI a certain number of tickets, and she and CWI President Bert Glandon were there. Niland said she enjoyed the president’s remarks.

“(Obama laid out) an amazing vision for the United States,” Niland said. Though she said she needs more extensive details, the president’s plan to make community college free for the first two years is a great idea to explore.

Obama ended his Boise speech with a rousing call for unity, not just along party lines, but “black or white,” “gay or straight” as well.

“We all share a common vision for our people,” Obama said. “... And we’ve got a lot of stuff to do in this new century.”



Kelcie Moseley is the IPT education and legislative reporter. Contact her at 465-8178 or kmooseley@idahopress.com. Follow @kelcielpt.