

Gingrich calls for replacing EPA

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Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich called Tuesday for the elimination of the Environmental Protection Agency, which he wants to replace with a new organization that would work more closely with businesses and be more aggressive in using science and technology.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Gingrich said the EPA was rarely innovative and focused only on issuing regulations and litigation.

"What you have is a very expensive bureaucracy that across the board makes it harder to solve problems, slows down the development of new innovations," Gingrich said.

Gingrich, who has acknowledged that he's mulling a run for the Republican presidential nomination, was in Iowa to talk to the Iowa Renewable Fuels Association. He also met privately with Republican legislators, often a sign in Iowa that people are laying the groundwork for a campaign. The state has the nation's first presidential caucuses.

Gingrich, who has made several visits to Iowa recently, said the EPA was founded on sound ideas but has become a traditional Washington bureaucracy. Gingrich had previously mentioned his desire to change the EPA, but Tuesday's explanation was the first time he made a specific proposal for replacing the agency, Gingrich spokesman R.C. Hammond said.

"We need to have an agency that is first of all limited, but cooperates with the 50 states," Gingrich said. "The EPA is based on bureaucrats centered in Washington issuing regulations and litigation and basically opposing things."

A telephone message left for EPA spokesman Brenden Gilfillan in Washington was not immediately returned.

Gingrich denied his proposal would result in environmental damage, saying he would replace the EPA with what he called the Environmental Solution Agency.

"I think you have an agency which would get up every morning, very much like the National Institutes for Health or the National Science Foundation, and try to figure out what do we need to do today to get a better environment that also gets us a better economy," he said.

Gingrich also said his proposed agency would pursue the development of a clean coal and rewrite regulations governing the development of small nuclear plants.

"There's a whole new emerging technology that allows you to build smaller nuclear plants, but all of our rules were designed for very complex, very expensive systems," he said.

Gingrich's anti-Washington, pro-business theme was designed to appeal to the conservatives who dominate Republican precinct caucuses, which traditionally launch the presidential nominating process. Iowa's next presidential caucus is Feb. 6, 2012.

"The level of control that Washington bureaucrats want to extend over topics they don't understand and communities they don't live in is wrong," he said. "Having an attitude of getting up every morning and trying to stop the economy is just a very destructive attitude."