WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2009 THE GREENVILLE NEWS

# Obama says economy 'moving in the right direction'

By Jennifer Loven
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama claimed early progress Tuesday night in his campaign to turn the nation's economy around and declared that despite obstacles ahead, "we're moving in the right direction."

At the second prime-time news conference of his presidency, Obama also toned down his criticism of AIG bonuses and shot back at critics of his budget.

In office for 64 tumultuous days, Obama cast his budget — now under review in Congress — as essential if the economy is to recover. The plan "is inseparable from this recovery because it is what lays the foundation for a secure and lasting prosperity," he said.

The president also defended the U.S. dollar in the wake of China's suggestion for a universal currency, saying: "The dollar is extraordinarily strong right now," and "I don't believe that there is a need for a global currency."

In a news conference lasting 55 minutes, Obama was flexible on some points, unyielding on others. Pressed on why he seemed to delay before condemning the AIG bonuses, he said, "It took us a couple of days because I like to know what I'm talking about before I speak."

The news conference was dominated by questions about the economy. Obama defended the steps his administration has taken, saying teachers and others have jobs today because of the economic stimulus measure, and the nation is "beginning to see signs of increased sales and stabilized housing prices."

He said full-fledged recovery is months away, adding, "It will take patience."

At the same time, he said, "we're in a better place because of the decisions that we made."

Obama put in a plug for extraordinary authority to take over failing companies, much as the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. now does for banks.

"It is precisely because of the lack of this authority" that AIG's problems threatened to bring down the U.S. economy, he said.