Group plans protests ahead of China visit

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 31 (UPI) -- A coalition of U.S. labor unions, Democratic politicians and trade advocacy groups is planning a trade protest ahead the Chinese vice president's U.S. visit.

The coalition said it plans to announce Tuesday the final states of its campaign in Washington, The New York Times reported. The group said it will lobby the Obama administration to file trade cases against China in the auto industry, accusing China of unfairly subsidizing its auto parts makers and illegally restricting export of raw materials foreign parts makers need to stay competitive.

Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping, expected to succeed President Hu Jintao as China's leader, is scheduled to visit the White House on Feb.14.

The coalition said a 900-percent increase in auto parts imports from China during the last 10 years is at the root of job losses in Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania, the Times said.

"The Chinese have cheated," said Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, a congressional leader of the trade effort along with Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich.

Chinese officials have denied violating international trade agreements.

However, Brown said lawmakers are moving toward a more aggressive trade policy with China after China last month slapped tariffs on $4.9 billion-a-year in imports of U.S. sport utility vehicles and large cars.

Coalition leaders said they were preparing legal papers that argue the Obama administration should file trade cases with the Commerce Department and the World Trade Organization, challenging reported Chinese subsidies for auto parts exporters, as well as challenging China's export restrictions on rare earth metals needed for many auto parts.

The briefs also call on the WTO to challenge Chinese decisions demanding U.S. automakers transfer their latest electric car technology to China if they want the cars to qualify for green energy subsidies when sold in China.