

President Obama is perpetrating a scam on the American people by offering altered figures about the unemployment rate, Herman Cain said Thursday.

The former presidential candidate and pizza executive charged Obama with deception, saying the president had changed the underlying assumptions to devise a jobs number that was rosier than the truth.

"I can count. And I also know when they have manipulated the numbers to create whatever number they want," Cain told activists at the Conservative Political Action Conference.

Numerous Republicans, including Rep. Allen West (Fla.), have questioned the veracity of the unemployment rate after it dropped in January to 8.3 percent, the lowest in three years.

The sign of progress was a major boon to Obama's reelection prospects. Republicans have sought to downplay the gains by alleging the unemployment rate was doctored or that it doesn't reflect underemployment and those who have stopped looking for work — even though the Labor Department calculates the rates the same way it does under any presidency.

"This administration is deceiving the American people. They say we are in a recovery," Cain said.

Although many of the Republican Party's top luminaries — John Boehner, Mitch McConnell, Marco Rubio — spoke at the conference Thursday, it was Cain whose presentation prompted the most excitement. The crowd of thousands of conservatives cheered his 9-9-9 tax plan and erupted with applause when he said he knew the audience contained some of those who supported his presidential campaign.

Cain dropped out of the Republican primary in December amid collapsing poll numbers and a chain of allegations of sexual harassment. He cited neither of those in explaining why he bowed out.

"There are two reasons I dropped out of the race: gutter politics; No. 2, I chose to put family first," he said.

"In making that decision, I knew that we — together — could change Washington, D.C., from the outside and from the bottom up, even if your David didn't make it to the White House," Cain said, comparing himself to biblical King David.

Since leaving the presidential campaign, Cain has been on a mission to persuade other candidates to adopt the most successful element of his platform: his plan for 9 percent income tax, sales tax and corporate tax. Cain implored activists at CPAC to get in touch with their candidates for House and Senate and demand they too get behind 9-9-9.

"I don't regret making the move that I made, because there's more than one way to skin a cat," he said.

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