

## Obama, McCain hope to get Clinton's female supporters in their camps

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AUSTIN – Most of Hillary Rodham Clinton's 18 million votes – those cracks in the glass ceiling – were from women, and now as her supporters wander a bit dazed from the primary head-thumping, the other campaigns are offering flowery pitches and candied words to attract them.

The prize is considerable: In the 2004 presidential election, 8 million more women than men voted. And so, it was not surprising that only a few hours after Mrs. Clinton gave her June 7 concession speech that both John McCain's and Barack Obama's Web sites featured photos of themselves with the New York senator and an invitation to her supporters.

Both sides recognize the disappointment and anger of many Clinton supporters, and Mr. Obama hopes to assuage those feelings today when he campaigns with Mrs. Clinton in Unity, N.H.

"If they see her genuinely fighting for Senator Obama, out there campaigning and asking her supporters to come on board, saying it's imperative we elect him, I think that will go a long, long way," said state Sen. Leticia Van de Putte of San Antonio, co-chairwoman of the Democratic National Convention and a Clinton supporter.

Mr. McCain also hopes to capitalize on those feelings.

"I feel a lot of Democratic women feel this election was stolen," said Mica Mosbacher of Houston, co-chairwoman of Women for McCain.

"Our perception is that there is some resentment by women against the Democratic Party, and maybe along with resentment comes the realization that the politics of the Democrats aren't good enough for women," she said. "As Republicans, I think we have a tremendous opportunity to reach across the aisle."

### Women on staff

The McCain campaign recently brought aboard Cathy Gillespie, another Texan who ran President Bush's "W Stands for Women" effort. To showcase its respect for strong women, the campaign has been prominently featuring former chief executives of Hewlett-Packard and eBay – Carly Fiorini and Meg Whitman.

The Obama campaign welcomed new senior adviser Stephanie Cutter, the former communications director for Kerry 2004; former John Edwards Iowa director Jen O'Malley Dillon as battleground state director, and former Clinton campaign manager Patti Solis Doyle, to serve as chief of staff to the vice presidential nominee.

Meanwhile, Cindy McCain has opened up for a cover profile in *Newsweek* and Michelle Obama fist-bumped with hosts of *The View*.

Third-party groups are also getting involved. Within a week after Mrs. Clinton suspended her campaign, Planned Parenthood launched an initiative to inform women that Mr. McCain opposes abortion, mandatory insurance coverage for contraception and sex education that goes beyond abstinence-only.

Even conservative commentator George Will believes Mr. McCain's abortion stance could cost him among Democratic women, who might be angry but will eventually return to the fold over such issues, he said.

"Three-quarters of the country at this point does not know that John McCain is pro-life," Mr. Will told MSNBC's Chris Matthews. "And I think once the Democrats make that known, as surely they will, these people will come scampering back to the Democratic Party in droves."

Indeed, a recent Gallup poll already shows that Mr. Obama is the early beneficiary of Mrs. Clinton's withdrawal. He and Mr. McCain are running almost even among men, but women favor the Democrat 51 percent to 38 percent.

Fundraising also reflects the tilt. Through May, 43 percent of Mr. Obama's contributors over \$200 have been women, compared with 27 percent for Mr. McCain, according to the nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics.

'Watershed moment'

Ms. Mosbacher said women don't have to agree with Mr. McCain on all issues, but he will appeal to them through his work for equal opportunity, his 24 years of experience and his push for low taxes and reduced government.

"It's a watershed moment," said Ms. Mosbacher, wife of former Commerce Secretary Robert Mosbacher. "And we need to mobilize our women."

Ms. Van de Putte said Clinton supporters will come around to Mr. Obama, but she worries that they might not work as hard as they should for his candidacy.

"Too much is at stake for me to say he really wasn't my candidate," she said.

Debbie Walsh, director of Rutgers University's Center for American Women and Politics, said neither candidate should take the women's vote for granted, and both are going to have to work for it.

For Mr. Obama, the older and working-class women who showed up for Mrs. Clinton are dependable voters who will return in November – a lot more trustworthy at the polls than the tide of youngsters who helped launch his candidacy.

"The women's vote is an absolute must for the Democrats to win. Senator McCain is going to have to cut into that," Ms. Walsh said.

For Mr. McCain, he must look to married women who traditionally vote Republican, and independents, she said.

And women – who are generally more vulnerable in economic downturns – will want to hear from both, primarily on kitchen-table pocketbook issues, she said.

"You can pull out all the old stand-bys for women voters, such as 'soccer moms,' but if you've got to drive your kid to soccer games and it takes \$55 to fill your car, that becomes an issue," Ms. Walsh said. "It's the economy that's front and center."