

<http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/asection/la-na-campaign11-2008jul11,0,2255990.story>  
From the Los Angeles Times

## CAMPAIGN '08

### Obama lobbies for women's vote

With Clinton at his side, Obama focuses on economic issues and contrasts himself with McCain.

By Louise Roug and Maeve Reston

Los Angeles Times Staff Writers

July 11, 2008

FAIRFAX, VA. — Beginning at a breakfast fundraiser with Hillary Rodham Clinton, Barack Obama devoted his day to appealing to her most loyal supporters: women.

At events in New York and Virginia, he drew a sharp contrast with John McCain, charging that the Republican candidate does not support equal pay or abortion rights.

And, with women worried about the effect of the economy on their families, Obama issued a report on how his economic policies would affect women and emphasized his proposals to increase tax breaks for child care, guarantee paid sick leave and raise the minimum wage.

"When you look at the economic issues that matter most to women, he will not bring change and I will," Obama said.

McCain -- who plans to meet privately today with female business owners in the Hudson, Wis., area and hold a town hall focused on women's issues in Hudson, outside the Twin Cities -- dismissed Obama's approach as "big government." But he said in an interview Wednesday aboard his campaign bus that he was committed to doing whatever he could "to encourage the participation of women in all walks of life and make sure that any barriers to their advancement are eliminated."

In an election that is expected to be tight, undecided women are a crucial voting bloc and one that is increasingly leaning toward Obama. Since May, the Illinois senator has increased his advantage among women voters to 14 percentage points from 5, according to a poll released Thursday by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press.

"This year, both candidates realize they really need the women's vote," said Debbie Walsh, director of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University.

Obama may have an inherent advantage: Since 1980, women have tended to favor Democrats.

"With Hillary Clinton by your side and with the Democratic Party label next to your name, you've got a much better shot," said Jennifer Lawless, a political science professor at Brown University.

The sour economy could also help Obama. Women are more concerned about economic issues than men, said Barbara Burrell, a political scientist at Northern Illinois University. Obama has made the economy the centerpiece of his campaign, whereas McCain is perceived as more interested in foreign policy.

In the Democratic primaries, women disproportionately favored New York Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, and some of her supporters remain angry at Obama, believing Clinton was held to a different standard.

On Thursday, Clinton introduced Obama to more than 2,000 people at a Women for Obama fundraiser in New York. "Barack would get up every morning and go to the gym, and I would get up and get my hair done," she said. "It's just one of those Ginger Rogers-Fred Astaire things that are part of our lives."

Then she then turned serious, saying the stakes are high.

"I would argue they are particularly high for women," she said. "It matters greatly who our president is."

Obama supports abortion rights and has pledged to increase funding for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs.

At the fundraiser, Obama pledged to the crowd, "I'll never back down in defending a woman's right to choose."

McCain believes the Supreme Court's Roe vs. Wade decision, which affirmed a right to abortion, should be overturned. Women's groups have criticized him for saying that Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. and Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr. were model appointments.

The Arizona senator has said that he is "all in favor of pay equity for women," but he missed a vote on a bill that would make it easier for women to sue over pay discrimination. He has said that he is worried the measure would open the door to frivolous lawsuits.

On his campaign bus Wednesday, McCain said he could not name a campaign initiative focused on women that differed from current Bush administration policy.

But he said a McCain administration would pay particular attention to the increasing numbers of female small-business owners. "I will focus my

attention on doing everything I can to see that they succeed," he said.

On Thursday, McCain said he disagreed with Obama's proposal to require that employers give their workers seven days of sick leave each year and to expand the Family and Medical Leave Act. McCain told reporters after a town hall in Belleville, Mich., that sick days should be negotiated between management and labor. He called Obama's proposal to expand the Family and Medical Leave Act "a big-government solution."

Speaking to about 2,800 at a campaign rally at Robinson Secondary School in Fairfax, Va., Obama said that economic problems that affect women affect everyone. "When a job doesn't offer family leave, that also hurts families who may want to care for a newborn baby or an ailing parent. When there's no affordable child-care or after-school programs, that hurts children," he said. "When women only make 77 cents for every dollar that a man makes, that doesn't just hurt women. It hurts families."

[louise.roug@latimes.com](mailto:louise.roug@latimes.com)

[maeve.reston@latimes.com](mailto:maeve.reston@latimes.com)

Times staff writer Nicholas Riccardi contributed to this report.

---

If you want other stories on this topic, search the Archives at [latimes.com/archives](http://latimes.com/archives).

**TMSReprints**

Article licensing and reprint options

Copyright 2008 Los Angeles Times | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#)  
[Home Delivery](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Archives](#) | [Contact](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Help](#)

partners:

