



Powered by Clickability

In fundraising ranks, a gender gap is showing

By Fredreka Schouten, USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — In a historic election in which a woman almost won the Democratic nomination, men dominate the ranks of elite fundraisers in the presidential race, a USA TODAY analysis shows.

Women account for 59 out of more than 500 top fundraisers in Republican John McCain's campaign. Democrat Barack Obama has 148 female fundraisers out of more than 500.

This underscores a gender gap among the upper echelons of fundraisers — even as the two senators battle for the votes of women, who make up the majority of the electorate. These top fundraisers are known as bundlers because they raise money from business associates, friends and family.

"Most Americans would like to see women represented in politics, and political contributions are part of that process," said Sheila Krumholz, of the non-partisan Center for Responsive Politics. "That certainly applies to the more elite ranks of donors."

Men also account for a greater share of contributions. Male donors provided nearly 60% of donations larger than \$200 to Obama and nearly 72% of McCain's donations larger than \$200 through the end of May, according to the Center. Federal rules require candidates to report donors' names — but not their gender — once their totals exceed \$200.

By comparison, half of the money Democrat Hillary Rodham Clinton raised in her unsuccessful presidential bid came from women. Even so, Clinton also had nearly twice as many male bundlers as female bundlers.

Each candidate has high-profile women among their top fundraisers, such as Carly Fiorina, a former Hewlett-Packard CEO who advises McCain. Obama's female fundraisers include *Vogue* editor Anna Wintour and Penny Pritzker, a hotel heiress who is the Illinois senator's national finance chairwoman.

Female bundlers have raised at least \$6.2 million for McCain, not counting women who raised money jointly with their spouses. That's less than 10% of the funds collected by male bundlers, the analysis shows.

Women individually have raised at least \$10.3 million for Obama. Men have raised more than three times the amount collected by women.

In the analysis, USA TODAY used each candidate's list of bundlers to determine the gender of top fundraisers. The gender of one Obama bundler was not known.

Obama and McCain have not released the total amount of cash raised by each bundler but have grouped them in broad categories, starting with those who have collected at least \$50,000 each. Those categories were used to calculate the minimum amount each candidate has raised from male and female fundraisers. The campaigns do not break down the amount collected by each spouse.

Advertisement



McCain spokesman Brian Rogers said the gender gap among bundlers is not a "good gauge of much of anything." McCain "has a strong record of supporting equal opportunity and the issues women care about," he said.

Dana Singiser, a former Clinton aide who now helps Obama reach out to women, pointed to Pritzker and national finance director Julianna Smoot as signs that "women across the nation are playing critical roles" in the campaign.

The disparity in the ranks of female bundlers between the McCain and Obama campaigns reflects the long-standing trend of women tending to vote Democratic, said Debbie Walsh of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University.

Sarah Brewer of the Women & Politics Institute at American University says the reason fewer women raise money for candidates is straightforward: They are less likely to have top jobs in high-paying fields. Women hold less than 16% of corporate-officer slots at Fortune 500 companies, according to Catalyst, a female executives' group.

Donations from women have accounted for at least one-third of contributions to top presidential candidates since the 1992 campaign, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

Bobbie Kilberg, the CEO of a Virginia technology association, is a donor who has collected more than \$600,000 for McCain. She also was a top fundraiser for President Bush in 2004.

"I strongly, strongly believe in him," she said of McCain. "And if you believe in somebody, you ought to be able to put your time and effort when your heart is."

Contributing: Bruce Rosenstein, Tom Ankner.

Find this article at:

http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/election2008/2008-07-30-gender_N.htm

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.