

## Most Clinton Backers Say Palin's Too Far a Stretch

by Associated Press

Saturday, September 6, 2008

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John McCain and vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin attend a rally in Cedarburg, Wis. (AP Photo)

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Sandy Goodman was deeply disappointed when Hillary Rodham Clinton didn't get the Democratic nomination, then again when she was bypassed for the VP spot. So Goodman, a longtime Florida Democrat, flirted with thoughts of shunning Barack Obama, and perhaps even voting Republican.

Then John McCain picked Sarah Palin as his running mate, and suddenly things became clear to Goodman: The Republicans had no place for her.

"Boy, you are sure not talking to ME!" Goodman, 61, says she thought when she heard Palin's views on issues like abortion rights. Now, Goodman is volunteering for Obama.

But then there's Chrissie Peters. The 37-year-old librarian from Bristol, Tenn. has always voted Democratic and supported Clinton. She assumed she'd vote for Obama — until she saw Palin speak. Now she's voting Republican.

"She was so down-to-earth, a regular person," says Peters. "She hasn't been in politics her whole life, so she isn't jaded or tainted. And I love that she's a mom. Yes, I disagree with some of her positions, but that's what this country is about."

One of the most intriguing questions about the Alaska governor's sudden arrival on the national scene has been what impact it'll have on women voters — especially those who supported Clinton.

Palin made an overture to those voters in her first speech after being chosen by McCain.

Will the pitch work?

Evidence so far shows that Palin is not drawing a lot of support from voters outside the Republican

base.

An ABC News poll released Friday found the selection of Palin makes people likelier to vote for McCain by just 6 percentage points — half the 12-point margin by which Sen. Joe Biden makes them more likely to support Obama.

And as for Clinton supporters, eight in 10 said they'd vote for Obama in November, according to a Gallup Poll conducted last weekend after McCain announced his selection of Palin.

Diane Mantouvalos, for one, thinks the numbers are behind the tide.

"We've always been a few weeks ahead of the polls," says the founder of the JustSayNoDeal Web site, a clearinghouse for groups of disaffected Clinton supporters seeking to punish the Democratic Party and Obama for what they see as inexcusable treatment of Clinton.

Mantouvalos hasn't decided whom she'll support in November. But she believes many former Clinton supporters will end up voting for McCain. And she thinks Palin will help make that happen.

"I was there," Mantouvalos says of Palin's convention speech. "I was blown away. She seemed so confident in her own skin."

And what about all the issues on which Palin differs so sharply from Clinton? "Principle trumps issues for this group," she says of her and others like her.

To Gloria Steinem, the nation's most recognizable feminist, that logic is mystifying.

"Selecting Sarah Palin ... is no way to attract most women, including die-hard Clinton supporters," Steinem wrote this week in the Los Angeles Times, arguing that McCain's running mate is seriously underqualified. "Palin shares nothing but a chromosome with Clinton."

In an e-mail to The Associated Press, Steinem added: "I have yet to meet one single human being who was for Hillary and is now for McCain, with or without Palin, but some must exist somewhere."

Historically, women vote on the issues, not by the gender of the candidate, and since 1980 they've trended Democratic for that reason, says Debbie Walsh, director of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University.

"I wouldn't expect that the McCain-Palin ticket will pull in Clinton supporters," says Walsh. "They were supporting her on the issues. Her gender just added to the appeal."

Whatever appeal gender has for female voters, Obama's campaign is not about to let McCain corner the market. Clinton herself, along with Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano and Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, all are scheduled to campaign for Obama in the coming weeks, particularly where they can vouch for Obama to large female audiences

The Washington group EMILY's List, which backs female candidates who support abortion rights, says its own polling shows that a majority of Clinton supporters — 55 percent — say Palin's presence on the ticket makes them even less likely to vote McCain. Only 9 percent say it makes that more likely.

"There really couldn't be more of a distance between Sarah Palin and Hillary Clinton on the issues and the agenda that Clinton fought so passionately for," the group's executive director, Ellen Moran, said in an interview. "The more (Clinton supporters) are learning about Palin, the more they are coming to the Obama-Biden ticket."

That's not the case for self-described "Clinton die-hard" Amy Goldman. The consultant from Edgewater, N.J. says she'd been leaning toward McCain for a while, but his pick of Palin sealed the deal.

"His pick goes outside the box," said Goldman, 52, who like Mantouvalos is involved in the Internet-based efforts to challenge the Democratic party. "I'm not being bitter by voting this way. I really think they're a great ticket."

Liz Hunter won't go that far. The 25-year-old Clinton fan is deeply conflicted. She's not ready to support Obama, but doesn't think she could seriously vote Republican. She read Palin's speech online, so she could pay attention to the details. "Sometimes on TV, you get caught up with all the applause," she says.

"I really respect the fact that she has five children and a career, and keeps her family strong," said Hunter. But at the same time, "I just don't think I could go over to that side." The debates will decide it, she says.

For Goodman, the Florida voter who's shifted to Obama, there will be no such indecision. She'll work to convince fellow Clintonites that they shouldn't be swayed by the woman on the Republican ticket.

"I was insulted when she referred to Hillary and the 18 million cracks in the ceiling," Goodman says, referring to Clinton's line that her primary votes put that many cracks in the glass ceiling that has held women back. "I don't believe Hillary was making those 18 million cracks for Sarah Palin."

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