

Obama fundraising drive targets the wealthy

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President Obama's week-long fundraising swing through the western United States, with stops in Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle and Denver, showed his ability to combine demagoguery about raising taxes on the wealthy with direct appeals to the super-rich to finance his reelection campaign. At least \$5 million was raised in the California stops alone, according to press reports.

The outpouring of support from the well-heeled, including Hollywood figures and Silicon Valley CEOs, shows that the ruling class understands very well that Obama's calls for the rich to pay their "fair share" of deficit reduction are no threat to their own property and wealth. On the contrary, a sizable section of the financial elite understands that it needs the fig leaf supplied by Obama to stave off the real danger of a movement from below.

The campaign tour began with Obama for America COO Ann Marie Habershaw alerting campaign teams that fundraising figures for the third quarter, which must be reported to the Federal Election Commission by October 15, would be critical. "What we do before midnight on September 30th determines our budget until the end of this year," she wrote in an e-mail published by the Washington congressional daily *The Hill*.

After raising a record \$86 million in the April-June quarter, divided between his reelection campaign and the Democratic National Committee, Obama was compelled to cancel most fundraising events in July because of the protracted wrangling with congressional Republicans over the federal budget deficit. August, which is a month-long vacation for many of the super-rich, is traditionally the slowest month for campaign fundraising.

As a result, the month of September was devoted to raising the bulk of the \$55 million targeted for the third quarter. Obama has headlined 11 fundraisers, Vice

President Joseph Biden 12, and Michelle Obama another four.

Obama raised and spent \$745 million during the 2008 campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination and then the presidency, by far the most of any candidate in history, and his reelection campaign is widely expected to top the \$1 billion mark.

Habershaw's e-mail spelled out the financial goals of the campaign. "The scale we're talking about is unparalleled," she wrote, "and any time someone uses the word 'unparalleled,' that means it probably doesn't happen for free."

At each of the five western cities, Obama combined private dinners where wealthy backers paid \$35,800 each—the legal limit—to rub shoulders with him, and public appearances at campaign-style rallies. In several stops, there was more than one closed-door event, usually with the press barred and no public witnesses to the exchanges between the president and his big contributors.

In the San Francisco Bay area, Obama held fundraisers September 25 in the wealthy Silicon Valley suburbs of Woodside and Atherton—the latter at the home of Facebook Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg, as well as a dinner at the San Francisco home of Marc Benioff, CEO of salesforce.com. This was followed the next morning by a breakfast at the St. Regis Hotel, and then a town-hall event at the headquarters of the networking site LinkedIn in Mountain View, attended by 300 people.

In Los Angeles, Obama spoke before 800 people at the House of Blues Monday, telling them, "What this election is about is everyone gets a fair share." Television actor Jesse Tyler Ferguson emceed the event, and declared, "The end of 'don't ask don't tell' is the signature achievement of our time."

Apparently permitting gays to serve openly in the military is more important than who the military, under

Obama's command, is ordered to bomb and kill. Obama escalated the war in Afghanistan, instigated the war in Libya, and continued the US occupation of Iraq, to say nothing of keeping open Guantánamo Bay, carrying out the Wall Street bailout and continuing the policies of George W. Bush in a myriad of other areas.

At the House of Blues, Obama postured as the advocate of the working man. "If asking a billionaire to pay the same tax rate as a plumber is class warfare, then sign me up," he told the audience, urging them to support his proposed American Jobs Act, which would finance a handful of jobs with token increases in taxes on the rich and corporations, while leaving the overwhelming majority of the unemployed to fend for themselves.

Referring to the federal budget deficit, he declared that America cannot "just cut our way out of this problem," adding, "We're laying off teachers in droves right here in California. It doesn't make any sense. It's unfair to our kids." He did not address the fact that most of these layoffs are being carried out under the auspices of a Democratic governor, Democratic mayors and Democratic-controlled local governments.

The House of Blues event was followed by a dinner at the Fig & Olive restaurant, where 100 people paid \$17,900 each to eat with Obama and take part in a question and answer session. According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, those attending included actors Jack Black, Danny DeVito, Jamie Foxx, Gina Gershon and Eva Longoria and producers Judd Apatow, Aaron Sorkin and Jon Landau ("Avatar" and "Titanic").

"Hollywood is very positive," Landau told the *Reporter*. "I think they're very excited about what is going to happen next year."

Accompanying the trip, there were press reports suggesting that the fundraising crisis was not just the product of Obama's enforced focus on the Washington deficit debate. The *New York Times* reported September 25, in a lengthy front-page analysis, that many small donors from the 2008 campaign were now disillusioned with the Obama administration and reluctant—or entirely unable, because of the impact of the economic slump—to make any contribution to the Obama reelection campaign.

The newspaper commented that "the frustration and disillusionment that have dragged down Mr. Obama's approval ratings have crept into the ranks of his

vaunted small-donor army, underscoring the challenges he faces as he seeks to rekindle grass-roots enthusiasm for his re-election bid."

Dozens of contributors interviewed by the *Times* over the past two weeks complained of Obama's "overly conciliatory approach to Congressional Republicans," and said they would not make phone calls, knock on doors or otherwise participate personally in the Democratic presidential campaign.

These included one man, Edward Blair, a 65-year-old lawyer from North Carolina, who was featured in an Obama campaign video earlier this year, but has not agreed to make a donation. While still expressing illusions in Obama, Blair described himself to the *Times* as "disappointed" and "bewildered" by the Obama administration's performance.

Meanwhile, a news item posted on the Internet underscores the utterly reactionary character of the Obama administration and its cowering before the ultra-right. A White House official adamantly denied a report from a black talk-radio host who claimed that Obama told a group of black journalists that he had tried to save Troy Davis, the Georgia man executed last week despite international appeals to spare his life.

White House communications director Dan Pfeiffer flatly denied the report that Obama had expressed opposition to the legalized murder of Davis, held for nearly two decades on Georgia's death row despite the collapse of the case against him, including the recanting by seven of the nine supposed witnesses.



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