

# Trailing in pennsylvania



Zeleny, J., Seelye, K. Q. (2008). Trailing in Pennsylvania, Obama Sharpens Tone. Retrieved April 21, 2008, from New York Times Web site: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/21/us/politics/21dems.html?ref=us&pagewanted=all>

As voters in the state of Pennsylvania prepare to vote in the 2008 Democratic Presidential primary, the two main candidates, Senators Hillary Clinton (New York) and Barack Obama (Illinois) intensify criticisms of each other in a final push to influence undecided voters. Filed from Reading, a city 60 miles northwest of Philadelphia, New York Times writers Jeff Zeleny and Katharine Q. Seelye examine how each candidate, particularly Obama who is trailing Clinton (in Pennsylvania) in multiple opinion polls, is trying to secure both the popular vote as well as delegates.

In U. S. Presidential primaries, the Democratic and Republican parties (the largest political parties in the United States) nominate an official candidate to run during the general election; which takes place on the first Tuesday in November. From January through June every four years, each of the 50 states hold elections (also known as primaries or caucuses) to determine how many delegates (party representatives) each candidate receives.

Delegates are determined by the percentage of the popular vote received by each candidate; with each state and party having different allocation rules.

Senator John McCain (Arizona) is the presumptive nominee for the Republican Party. (Candidates are officially nominated by the delegates at the national party conferences which usually take place between July and September.) Accordingly, Clinton and Obama currently receive most of the media attention as they are still fighting for the nomination. With the Pennsylvania primary on April 22, this New York Times article examines the tactics used by the Democratic candidates. Zeleny and Seelye note that

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Clinton, who led amongst Pennsylvania voters by as many as 16 percentage points at the start of April, has seen her lead reduced to five or six points in the final days before the primary.

While Obama leads Clinton in total delegates received (pledged), a victory in Pennsylvania would play a critical role in helping him quickly secure the nomination; leaving Obama with more time and resources to focus on McCain. In the article, media consultant Neil Oxman estimates that Obama is outspending Clinton by a ratio of two-to-one on television advertisements in the Keystone state as Obama hopes to convince voters that he is the best Democratic candidate. Further, Oxman believes that Obama will spend "\$20 million by Tuesday, making this by far the most expensive presidential primary in state history."

Zeleny and Seelye write that Obama has a two-part Pennsylvania strategy. First, Obama is "trying to appeal to well-educated, liberal, affluent voters for whom the war in Iraq is a central issue." Second, Obama seeks to move beyond his most reliable base, black voters, and "has campaigned in each corner of the state, making forays into Mrs. Clinton's base and trying to capture some of those delegates." This would not only increase Obama's base, but would also force Clinton to defend areas and demographics that have traditionally supported her.

The article goes on to address the support Obama is receiving from Pennsylvania-based politicians and interest groups. With the support of U. S. Senator Bob Casey (Pennsylvania), U. S. Representative Chaka Fattah (Philadelphia) and the Service Employees International Union, Obama has intensified his criticisms of Clinton in recent weeks claiming he is responding to Clinton's tactics. Obama argues that he is the best candidate to take on

McCain in the general election and points to his lead in delegates as well as state primaries won as evidence of his strength as a candidate.

Zeleny and Seelye also comment that Obama's Pennsylvanian support network is seeking to register more voters. While some of these newly register voters are pledging their support to Clinton, a recent " poll found 62 percent of the new voters said they planned to vote for Mr. Obama."

Additionally, Obama " is using his fund-raising advantage to pay for a multimillion-dollar campaign to find supporters in smaller cities across the state, particularly ones with pockets of black voters."

Conversely, even though she trails Obama in national polls as well as delegates, though, Clinton argues that she is the best candidate to beat McCain on November 4. With the support of former President Bill Clinton (also her husband) and daughter Chelsea, Clinton has concentrated her efforts on voters in the industrial regions of the state (areas outside of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia) where Obama's support is weakest. Further, Clinton " hoped to drive up her support among older, blue-collar voters who are concerned broadly about their economic condition and national security." Additionally, " a 'Women for Hillary' operation is rotating around the suburbs."

Yet, Zeleny and Seelye note that the " pressure is on Mrs. Clinton to get at least 50 percent of the delegates." Clinton is particularly interested in convincing voters that she has a more affable personality than is currently perceived by the voters and media as she " is still battling low favorability ratings." Despite recent gains by Obama, a victory for Clinton would most likely prolong the race as she contends that Pennsylvanian voters are more reflective on national voters which will be essential against McCain. Even Mr.

Casey, an Obama supporter, believes the even the recent "progress is [not] enough to win the primary here."