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Election 2008

Obama's Fundraising Could Re-Draw Election Map

by Peter Overby

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Alex Wong

Barack Obama speaks at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center in Washington, D.C., on Tuesday. Getty Images

[All Things Considered](#), July 17, 2008 · Democrat Barack Obama's presidential campaign collected \$52 million in June — making it the Illinois senator's second best month for fundraising.

The total seems to quash rumors that his money operation is in trouble. This spring, it seemed as if Obama's money magic might be evaporating.

Obama raised \$55 million in February, a record for American politics. But after that, the monthly totals started slipping — to \$43 million, to \$31 million, down to \$22 million in May.

Twenty-two million dollars, by the way, is what John McCain raised in June. That was his best month ever. But now, Obama's campaign says it raked in more than twice as much as McCain last month.

Still, Obama campaign manager David Plouffe this week made a fundraising pitch to the campaign faithful.

"So, just know that we treasure and value your relationship with us — what you've already done for the campaign," he said in an e-mail. "But the only way we're going to be successful over these next 16 weeks is if you get involved at a historic level to allow us to win."

"Getting involved at a historic level," of course, is campaign-speak for "give more money."

Cash Aids Obama's Fight For Virginia

Obama's record-setting fundraising allows him to boost his efforts in traditionally red states like Virginia that have recently become competitive.

Virginia last voted Democratic for president in 1964. But in 2005, voters elected a Democratic governor, and in 2006, a Democratic senator. Obama is opening 20 offices in the state. In Fairfax County, with more voters than anyplace else in Virginia, he'll have a staffer working each county supervisor's district.

"Clearly, the Obama campaign has made a strategic decision to invest heavily in Virginia and put it in play, and that can only be a good thing for all the rest of us," says Democrat Gerry Connolly, the Fairfax County board chairman, who is running for Congress this year.

Connolly says his campaign has teamed up with Obama's and with the campaign of former Gov. Mark Warner, who is running for Senate.

"We already are doing coordinated canvassing, so that's already started," Connolly says. "The energy and

enthusiasm level among the grassroots and various pockets of the electorate is about as fever pitch as anything I remember in 30 years of political involvement in Northern Virginia."

McCain's War Chest

But despite some early expectations to the contrary, Obama isn't exactly leaving McCain in the campaign cash dust. One reason: The national party committees play a key role in the fall campaigns. When you add in the party revenues, McCain has a cash-on-hand advantage of about \$3 million.

James Campbell, head of the political science department at the University of Buffalo, puts Obama's June fundraising in perspective.

"Even though \$50 million is a lot of money, it doesn't tilt things much in his direction when you figure what the Republican Party has been collecting as well," he says.

Add one more twist: McCain is taking \$84 million in public funds for the fall. So after Labor Day, he won't need to do any fundraising.

Obama is using private funds, so he'll need to achieve a series of \$50 million months to keep up the pace.

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