



## The more things change in Dems battle, the more they remain the same

**By Dean Balsamini**

April 20, 2008, 10:36PM

It's been six weeks since Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama last faced each other on the field of battle, in the Mississippi primary.

Much has happened in that time - the Rev. Jeremiah Wright controversy, the Bosnia mess, the "bitter" remarks about guns-and-God voters -- but for all the screaming headlines, the Democratic presidential campaign remains a grind-it-out slugfest as Obama and Mrs. Clinton prepare to go head-to-head in Pennsylvania Tuesday, with 158 delegates at stake.

Obama remains ahead in the delegate count, but likely can't win the remaining primaries big enough to grab the 2,025 delegates he needs to take the nomination. He has also won more popular votes and more states outright than Mrs. Clinton.

Hillary, meanwhile, continues to insist that as the winner of more of the bigger states, including Ohio and others crucial in the general election, she is the best candidate to take on Republican John McCain in the fall, no matter what the delegate math says.

In other words: He can't knock her out and she won't quit, and little outside of an Obama win Tuesday is likely to change that.

Which means continued bad news for the Democrats.

"It's beginning to look like Grant and Lee in the spring of 1864, fighting one battle of attrition after another," said Dr. Jeffrey Kroessler, an historian, author and a professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. "It's gone further than anyone thought it would go, and the longer this goes, the worse it gets."

Mrs. Clinton, who needs to win Pennsylvania to keep her presidential ambitions alive, leads in the polls but Obama has cut into her one-time double-digit lead in recent weeks.

Staten Islander Kelvin Alexander, an Obama supporter, said Mrs. Clinton should withdraw if she loses there.

"If Obama wins, she's all but lost the race and she has to face it," said Alexander, who campaigned for Obama in the Keystone State in recent days. "She's out on Wednesday."

### HILLARY FAITHFUL

Clinton supporters, not surprisingly, disagree.

"She has won every major state," said Islander Charles Greinsky, who has been stumping for Hillary in Reading, Penn., since last week. "If you factor in the disputed votes in Florida and Michigan, and you're going to have to factor them in before it's all over, it's a virtual tie."

Obama, he said, has won many caucus states where Republicans and independents cast ballots for him.

"Those weren't Democratic votes," said Greinsky, who has predicted a double-digit win for Mrs. Clinton in Pennsylvania. "I'll admit, I drink the Kool-Aid, but that's the reality."

But even New Jersey Gov. Jon Corzine, a Clinton supporter, said late last week that she needs a big win in Pennsylvania, and that a loss would be a "door closer."

"The math is very unforgiving at this point when it comes to delegate counts, and that's what it's all about," said Sen. Richard Durbin, who supports Obama.

Said Alexander, "There's no reason for this fight to continue. We need to get to the business at hand: Beating John McCain in November."

Overall, Obama's delegate lead is 1,645-1,504, with an additional 566 at stake in the remaining contests in eight states, Guam and Puerto Rico before the primary season ends on June 3.

If Obama captures 53 percent of them, which is the share he has gained in contests to date, he would close out the primary season with at least 1,945 delegates, only 80 less than the total needed to clinch the nomination.

If he and Mrs. Clinton split the 566 evenly, he would still be within 100 of the number needed.

Mrs. Clinton needs to win a forbidding 65 percent of the delegates in the remaining primaries to draw even with Obama in pledged delegates. It's a share she has achieved only once so far, in Arkansas, where her husband was governor for more than a decade.

At a town hall meeting in Reading, Obama said Mrs. Clinton believed in "the say-anything, do-anything, special interest-driven politics of Washington -- that that's how it's got to be, that that's how the game is played."

"I think we've got to change the tone of our politics," he said. "Our campaign is not perfect. There have been times when ... if you get elbowed enough, you start elbowing back."

Mrs. Clinton said it was Obama who had gone negative since their Philadelphia debate last week.

"It's no wonder that my opponent has been so negative these last few days of the campaign because I think you saw ... a big difference between us," she said at a rally in Bethlehem.

"While my opponent says one thing, his campaign, he does another. You can count on me to tell you what I will do," she said in Johnstown.

## **FIGHT BENEFITS MCCAIN**

The longer the fight goes, the better it is for McCain, said Kroessler. But he predicted that Mrs. Clinton would stay in until the Democratic convention this summer, no matter what.

"Why shouldn't she?" Kroessler said. "The honorable thing to do is stick it out until the end. She owes it to her supporters and she's already taken it this far."

But Richard Flanagan, a political science professor at the College of Staten Island, said that that wouldn't be a savvy move if Mrs. Clinton wants to run again in four years or if she wants to grow her stature in the Senate.

"Keeping this going past Pennsylvania will haunt her, stoking resentment within the party for years, especially if Obama messes up the general election," he said, because the perception will be that the party in-fighting hurt Obama. "She will have to deal with another sore point from the left: In addition to voting for the war; knocking down Obama."

Some of that damage might have already been done. Kroessler pointed out that McCain is now basically tied with Obama and Mrs. Clinton in the national polls.

4/2/2010

The more things change in Dems battl...

"McCain's done nothing to gain votes," he said. "The Dems have done plenty to lose votes."

--- *Contributed by Tom Wroblewski*

© 2008 SILive.com. All rights reserved.