

Obama touts party efforts across U.S.

CHICAGO (AP) - Barack Obama, the Senate candidate from Illinois who made a splash at the Democratic National Convention, may soon be coming to a town near you.

Since giving the keynote address at the DNC in July, Obama has become a sought-after commodity at national party functions and fund-raisers. With polls showing him well ahead in his race against Republican Alan Keyes, the young, Harvard-educated state senator is using his star status to lend a hand to other Democrats.

On Monday alone, Obama is scheduled to fly to Baltimore for his own fund-raiser, then head to Philadelphia to raise money for other Democrats and headline a voter reg-

istration rally. Weather permitting, he will end the day in Miami at another get-out-the-vote event.

"Since the day he got in the race, even in the primary, he has proven to be an inspiring candidate," said Cara Morris, a spokeswoman for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee.

Obama had raised \$9.8 million as of June 30, before his convention speech. His campaign did not provide more recent figures.

For a state legislator in his first national race, Obama has been sorting through an unusual number of invitations to headline events outside of his home state. Either he or Keyes will become the nation's only Black senator, giving the race instant buzz.

Recent polls have shown Obama leading Keyes by more than 40 percentage points in the race for the seat held by retiring Republican Sen. Peter Fitzgerald.

Obama calls the hype surrounding his candidacy "a little overblown." But he says he's not opposed to using that hype to try to help Democrats take the Senate on Nov. 2. Republicans control the Senate, 51-48, with one Democratic-leaning Independent.

"I'm doing it because I've served in the majority and the minority in the Legislature, and it's a lot more fun serving in the majority," Obama said. "So I want to help in any way that I can to make sure that we've got a Democratically controlled Senate."

Obama recently joined a

fund-raising committee, called America's Hope for a Majority, with two other Democratic candidates in tight races that could tip the balance of the Senate. Those candidates — Ken Salazar from Colorado and Betty Castor from Florida — will appear with Obama on Monday in Philadelphia.

Just this month, Obama has helped the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee raise money in New York and Chicago. He's also made his own fund-raising trips to Los Angeles, Alabama and Martha's Vineyard in recent weeks.

Keyes, a two-time presidential candidate from Maryland who was drafted by Republicans after their primary winner dropped out amid a sex scandal, criticizes Obama's frequent out-of-state appearances.

"He thinks the people of the state are just his stepping stone for other ambitions," Keyes said.

Obama said his time spent campaigning across Illinois far outweighs his trips out of state, and his job in the Senate would be to work for Illinois. But it can't hurt that he's gaining national recognition and a few IOUs, he said.

"Should we finish the job here in this campaign and I win the election, I think that I will have a higher profile than the average junior senator, and I think that can be beneficial in terms of leveraging issues and resources for the state," Obama said.

Black farm groups form huge alliance

WICHITA, Kan. (AP) - The nation's various Black farm groups formed a coalition Tuesday to pursue claims that the government discriminates against them on loans and farm programs.

The new group, the Congress of Black Farmer Organizations, contends the Agriculture Department has continued discriminatory practices and failed to live up to a sweeping civil rights case settled five years ago.

"It is something that is certainly overdue," said John Boyd, president of the National Black Farmers Association. "We need to work together on this issue. This is an issue the government has been able to keep us divided on for a number of years."

Besides Boyd's group, the new coalition includes the Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives and the Arkansas Land Development Fund. The groups met in Atlanta on Tuesday.

The move comes less than two weeks after the filing of a new class-action lawsuit, and just as the House Judiciary Committee prepares to hear testimony on the alleged failure of the earlier consent decree.

A report last month by the Environmental Working Group and the National Black Farmers Association said a large majority of the 96,000 Black farmers who sought restitution under the 1999 settlement were rejected.

The USDA has steadfastly contended its record on civil rights laws has been exemplary during President George W. Bush's administration. It cited numerous initiatives it has undertaken to give Black farmers a greater voice in the agency's organizational structure and its efforts to funnel more business to minority farmers.

Thousands of Black farmers gathered in Washington on Tuesday for a rally and to attend the House Judiciary Committee's special meeting, said Thomas Burrell, president of the Black Farmers and Agriculturalist Association.

"Discrimination is real and it tears apart families," Boyd said. "When you lose your farm you aren't losing just your job, you lose everything — you lose your family, you lose your heritage, you lose your history and you lose the way you make a living."

Together the coalition groups represent as many as 100,000 Black farmers, Burrell said.

"You may have individual (groups) represent different points of view. It doesn't mean they don't support the same issues," Burrell said.

Racing

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Black people. Black people said. "I had responsibility for promoting and marketing Miller brands in sports. I'm told that I'm responsible for bringing Miller brand products to NASCAR racing with Bobby Allison back then.

"I've been involved through a sponsorship and promoter's process with this sport for a long time and now I enjoy the luxury of being a team owner," Belnavis said. "What intrigued me about this sport was that racing was one thing that was born in the South."

Belnavis knows the history of auto racing.

"One would say that it was born by moonshiners running moonshine throughout the southeast portion of the country, primarily in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia," he said. "As quiet as it has been kept, we, as Black folks, were moonshiners as well. What really got me involved in this sport was the absence of

Black people. Black people were absent from a sport that got started in the South where two-thirds of Black people live.

"So there had to be a reason why we weren't involved in this sport beyond the obvious," Belnavis said. "I have taken this on as a challenge to help open up doors for other African-Americans to become involved in motor sports racing."

The track is an exciting place to be. In the NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series, trucks drive at an average speed of 160 mph for 147 laps, going 219 miles at approximately 40 seconds per lap to determine this year's winner. Las Vegas was the 19th of 25 circuit stops for the NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series. Belnavis would like to see more Blacks in the sport.

"There are plenty of opportunities for us as African-Americans to be involved in this racing industry," he said.

"I learned a lot about this industry as a business. Being in the game of NASCAR, I hope to expand the ability of others as a resource to make money and become a driver, accountant, public relations officer, crew chief, engineer and even an owner.

"There are career opportunities in racing and I hope that more of our people will take the time to learn about them and become involved, especially those of an entrepreneurial extent," Belnavis said.

Belnavis' trucks were one of a few vehicles not sponsored by a major company. His and Edwards' truck finished in the top 12.

Law Firm of Timothy C. Williams

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TIMOTHY C. WILLIAMS

Timothy Williams is a member of the Nevada & Illinois State Bar, practicing primarily in personal injury cases.

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892-0000
844 E. Sahara Avenue
Las Vegas, Nevada

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100 Men

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"I am proud to state that I have the opportunity to learn and serve under certainly one of the most dynamic leaders and visionaries in this international organization. That is Larry Mosley," Watkins said. "I understood one basic precept throughout my tenure with the chapter. In order to lead, one must first follow.

"I am passionate about this organization, the children we serve and our continued brotherhood," Watkins said.

Other elective offices were also filled.

Dr. Lawrence Gamell was elected vice president of internal affairs; Alex Thomas, vice president of external affairs; Shaundell Newsome, vice president of development; Dr. Harvey Williams, recording secretary; Randall C. Bacon, parliamentarian; Marcel Baker, financial secretary; and Bill Johnson, treasurer.

At-large board members are Julius Conner, Dr. William Dugan and Tommy Cason.