

Obama

(Continued from Page 1) ments from the likes of Oprah Winfrey, billionaire investor Warren Buffett and actors Matt Damon and Edward Norton.

"I certainly didn't expect to find myself in this position a year ago," said Obama, who added that as he talked to Americans about a possible presidential campaign, "I've been struck by how hungry we all are for a different kind of politics."

The 45-year-old has few accomplishments on the national stage after serving little more than two years in the Senate. But at a time when many voters say they are unhappy with the direction of the country, a lack of experience in the nation's capital may not be a liability.

"The decisions that have been made in Washington these past six years, and the problems that have been ignored, have put our country in a precarious place," Obama said.

He said people are struggling financially, dependence on foreign oil threatens the environment and national security and "we're still mired in a tragic and costly war that should have never been waged."

Clinton is expected to announce her presidential campaign within days, but her spokesman said there would be no comment on Obama's decision from the Clinton camp. Back from Iraq, she abruptly canceled a Capitol Hill news conference minutes after word of Obama's announcement, citing the unavailability of a New York congressman to participate.

Other Democrats who have announced a campaign or exploratory committee are 2004 vice presidential nominee John Edwards, former Iowa Gov. Tom Vilsack, Connecticut Sen. Chris Dodd and Ohio Rep. Dennis Kucinich. Sens. John Kerry of Massachusetts and Joe Biden of Delaware and New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson also are considering a run.

Obama's decision was relatively low-key after months of hype, with no speech or media appearance to accompany his online announcement. He



Ill. Sen. Barack Obama is inching closer to running for president. He recently formed an exploratory committee.

said he will discuss a presidential campaign with people around the country before his Feb. 10 event, and he wasted no time calling key activists Tuesday.

New Hampshire lobbyist Jim Demers talked with Obama for about five minutes. "He is extremely pumped and excited that this campaign is coming together," said Demers, who accompanied Obama on his visit to the state last month.

Obama's quick rise to national prominence began with his keynote speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention and his election to the Senate that year. He's written two bestselling autobiographies — "The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream" and "Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance."

Obama was born in Honolulu, Hawaii, where his parents met while studying at the University of Hawaii. His father was Black and from Kenya; his mother, White and from Wichita, Kan.

Obama's parents divorced when he was two and his father returned to Kenya. His mother later married an Indonesian student and the family moved to Jakarta. Obama returned to Hawaii when he was 10 to live with his maternal grandparents.

He graduated from Columbia University and

Harvard Law School, where he was the first African-American elected editor of the Harvard Law Review. Obama settled in Chicago, where he joined a law firm, helped local churches establish job training programs and met his future wife, Michelle Robinson. They have two daughters, Malia and Sasha.

In 1996, he was elected to the Illinois state Senate, where he earned a reputation as a consensus-building Democrat who was strongly liberal on social and economic issues, backing gay rights, abortion rights, gun control, universal health care and tax breaks for the poor.

The retirement of Republican Sen. Peter Fitzgerald of Illinois in 2004 drew a raft of candidates to the Democratic primary, but Obama easily outdistanced his competitors. He was virtually assured of victory in the general election when the designated Republican candidate was forced from the race by scandal late in the election.

Obama insisted during the 2004 campaign and through his first year in the Senate that he had no intention of running for president, but by late 2006, his public statements had begun to leave open that possibility.

Chicago alderwoman on charges of bribery

By Emre Parker and Mema Ayi
Special to Sentinel-Voice

CHICAGO (NNPA) - With supporters shouting her name at a recent press conference, harried 20th Ward Ald. Arenda Troutman asserted she will pursue her re-election campaign and prove her innocence.

"Alderman Troutman has done nothing wrong and, therefore, she is running for re-election," said Sam Adam Jr., Troutman's attorney. "Any challengers — all of you out there — whether you are a supporter or against, bring your 'A game' because Alderman Troutman is back."

Troutman's supporters were enthusiastic despite her arrest on federal bribery charges last week and a potential indictment. She received \$5,000 in cash, was promised an additional \$10,000 and a free commercial and residential unit in a new development, according to prosecutors.

Attorney Adam managed most of the press conference, alleging the alderman was quoted out of context in the oft-debated "most aldermen, most politicians are 'hos.'" Adam also referred to FBI informant Andre P. Johnson's criminal record and insisted Troutman will beat the federal charges.

As a crowd of approximately 25 supporters chanted, "We want Troutman!" opponent David E. Neely shouted, "I am a candidate for alderman in the 20th Ward. I have my 'A



Chicago Alderman Arenda Troutman vigorously defends her record as alderman during a news conference in Chicago last week, days after she was arrested on federal bribery charges. She's seeking re-election.

game' with me." Following the press conference Neely stepped to the podium and accused Troutman of "fraud and misrepresentation."

The other challengers are Willie B. (See Alderwoman, Page 14)

FEMA exec now at NASA

WASHINGTON (AP) - The second-in-command for the Federal Emergency Management Agency during its much-criticized response to Hurricane Katrina started a senior job at NASA this week.

Patrick Rhode, who was chief of staff and deputy director of FEMA under Michael Brown, was hired as a senior adviser to NASA Administrator Michael Griffin on communications issues, NASA spokesman David Mould said.

The hiring of Rhode, a former television reporter who was an advance man for the 2000 Bush-Cheney campaign, was made by the White House and Griffin together, Mould said.

Rhode's name emerged in an embarrassing e-mail exchange between him and Brown just hours after Katrina struck New Orleans. When asked if he was available

for a phone call, Brown said he was "sitting in the chair, putting mousse in my hair," and Rhode chimed in, "Me too!" The communication occurred early on the morning of on Aug. 29, 2005.

Disaster management professionals faulted the way the two men ran FEMA during Katrina and wondered how that qualified Rhode for NASA.

Rhode, whose appointment was first reported on the website NASA Watch, could not be reached for comment by phone or e-mail.

Mould said Rhode is qualified for the NASA job, commenting, "he's done a lot of things." He said Rhode had been associate administrator of the Small Business Administration and communications director for technology administration at the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Holiday

(Continued from Page 3)

Williams also likes that idea. "If legislators can't do that, there's a huge problem," she said.

Davis says that if the Legislature chose not to convene in honor of the King holiday, it would help others in the state recognize the importance of the day.

"It's not just a holiday for Blacks, but for all citizens. It's about the rights for all of us, not just one group," he said.

House Speaker Greg

Curtis agrees with Valentine that the current schedule allows lawmakers to honor King publicly.

"We don't mean it as be-

ing disrespectful for Dr. King any more than we do former presidents when we meet on Presidents Day" in February, Curtis said.

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