

Obama predicts big impact on Black voters

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) - Barack Obama predicted that Black voter turnout would swell by at least 30 percent if he wins the presidential nomination, giving Democrats victory in Southern states that have been voting Republican for decades.

"I'm probably the only candidate who having won the nomination can actually redraw the political map," Obama told a Democratic voter skeptical that he could defeat a Republican candidate.

"I guarantee you African-American turnout, if I'm the nominee, goes up 30 percent around the country, minimum," Obama said. "Young people's percentage of the vote goes up 25-30 percent. So we're in a position to put states in play that haven't been in play since LBJ."

Lyndon Baines Johnson ran for president in 1964 and won in a landslide. But since then the South has turned into a Republican stronghold.

Obama's comment came in response to former New Hampshire state Rep. Carol

Moore, who told him the candidate to get her vote will be the one she feels has the best chance of winning in the general election because she's so scared another Republican will replace President Bush.

She asked Obama what made him think he could win. Another voter later told Obama because of his lack of experience, "by any stretch of the imagination, it would be a leap of faith to vote for you."

Obama often rejects the politics of "who's up, who's down," but he showed he was following the polls. He said he fares best among independent voters, that he has lower negative ratings than his Democratic rivals and is leading Republicans Rudy Giuliani, Mitt Romney and Fred Thompson in head-to-head match-ups.

"I would include McCain, but John's having trouble right now, so that's not that big of a feat," Obama said of the Republican senator from Arizona, drawing laughter at the packed house party in the state capital attended by

about 70 people.

Obama noted that in Mississippi, Blacks make up more than a third of the state's population, but make up a smaller share of the electorate.

"If we just got African-Americans in Mississippi to vote their percentage of the population, Mississippi is suddenly a Democratic state," Obama said. He said Georgia would also turn Democratic and South Carolina would be in play.

Obama said his biggest weakness in the general election would be the same as in the primary where Hillary Rodham Clinton is his chief opponent — overcoming the perception that he hasn't been on the national stage long enough and isn't tough enough to win.

"Let me tell you, if I beat the Clintons, folks aren't going to ask whether I'm tough enough," Obama said to laughter from the crowd.

Obama said he has "no doubt that there will be attempts to dirty me up," but he is determined to respond

quickly to attacks if he wins the nomination.

"I'm in a very strong position now," Obama said. "I will be in a very strong position after I win the nomination. I mean, let's face it, if I win the nomination, it's pretty big news."

Obama rival John Edwards has been arguing that he is the most electable candidate in the South because he is from North Carolina and Obama and Clinton

have never run in the South.

"Senator Obama is right and wrong," said Edwards spokesman Chris Kofinis. "He's right that the American people want change, but wrong about who will bring that change. Senator Edwards is the strongest Democratic nominee because it's his bold transformational ideas that will increase turnout by 30 percent amongst African-Americans, Whites, women and all

Americans."

Clinton spokesman Howard Wolfson responded: "Hillary Clinton is surging and leading in both national primary and general election polls because Americans know she is the candidate with the strength and experience to make change happen. She has a 20-point lead in the primary and is beating the leading Republicans in red states like Ohio, Florida and Arkansas."

Drugs suspected in DMX home

PHOENIX (AP) - Deputies searching the home of rapper DMX during an investigation into claims of animal cruelty found about a half-pound of suspected illegal narcotics, the Maricopa County sheriff said Saturday.

No charges have been filed or arrests made. Sheriff Joe Arpaio said the investigation into alleged animal cruelty was ongoing, and the suspected drugs were being tested to confirm their content.

Friday's search was prompted by reports that pit bulls kept by the rapper at the home in rural north Phoenix were not being given enough food or water.

A dozen pit bulls were seized, the bodies of three dogs were dug up in the yard and a variety of assault-style weapons were taken from the home, Sheriff Joe Arpaio said.

DMX, whose real name is Earl Simmons,

was not at home and his lawyer said he hasn't been there for two months.

Arpaio said there was no indication the dogs were used in fights.

Reached Saturday, attorney Murray Richman said he had no knowledge of any narcotics.

The dogs were looked after by a caretaker and "all sorts of people" had been staying at the home, Richman said.

Arpaio said witnesses placed the 36-year-old rapper at the home within the past three weeks.

In 2002, Simmons pleaded guilty to animal cruelty, disorderly conduct and possession of drug paraphernalia in New Jersey.

Police said they found pipes for smoking crack cocaine, a pistol and 13 pit bulls at his home in 1999.

Census

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August, by the time they come to school, their parents may have lost their jobs."

Also, according to the report, Blacks experienced an 8.5 percent increase in the number of people who have no healthcare insurance (from 7 million to 7.6 million). The number of uninsured Hispanics increased from 14 million (32.3 percent) to 15.3 million (34.1 percent); and the number of uninsured Whites remained unchanged over the past two years, at 10.8 percent (21.2 million.).

Overall census findings for 2006 are:

—The number of uninsured children increased from 8 million (10.9 percent) in 2005 to 8.7 million (11.7 percent) in 2006.

—Overall, median household income in the U.S. climbed to \$48,200 between 2005 and 2006.

—The nation's overall poverty rate declined for the first time since 2000, from 12.6 percent in 2005 to 12.3 percent in 2006. There were 36.5 million people in poverty in 2006.

—About 9.8 percent (7.7 million) of the nation's families were in poverty in 2006. Married-couple families had a poverty rate of 4.9 percent

(2.9 million), compared to 28.3 percent (4.1 million) for female-householder (no-husband-present families), and 13.2 percent (671,000) for those with a male householder with no wife present. Those poverty rates remained steady between 2005 and 2006.

—The number of people without health insurance coverage overall rose from 44.8 million (15.3 percent) in 2005 to 47 million (15.8 percent) in 2006.

Bill Spriggs, chairman of the Howard University Economics Department, says rock bottom numbers for African-Americans are nothing new.

"We've been looking bad," Spriggs said. What is more alarming, he said, is "the extent to which inequality continues to grow because median incomes at least held steady from 2005 to 2006. But, all of the gains — relative gains — were at the top. So, we've had this continuous shift of more income at the top and we've had this continued growth of people who don't have health insurance."

The changes could come as African-Americans make more demands, Spriggs says.

He further states that while the Congressional

Black Caucus is working hard to increase incomes and health care for Black people, many Black people don't live in CBC districts.

"So, we must ask, 'What am I doing to make my representative more responsible? Are they towing the line with the president?'" he quizzes.

Malveaux says though African-Americans may not be surprised by the census numbers, they should be inspired to mobilize.

"The census data confirms what many African-Americans have been feeling, which is that we have been at the bottom economically, that economic injustice remains, that there's too much poverty in our community and too much unemployment and public policy has failed to address these issues," Malveaux said.

"African-American people need to organize, organize, organize," Malveaux added.

"It seems to me, that in terms of issues of poverty, it's raised and then it's dropped, it's raised and then it's dropped. Systematic structure of our economy is one that is unfair. It generates poverty and inequality, and we have to figure out ways to fix it."

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