

Obama hints of sharper focus on Hillary Clinton

WASHINGTON (AP) - Barack Obama talked of introducing some Chicago smackdown to his politics of hope, seeking a rebound after Hillary Clinton grasped victory in the New Hampshire primary.

In the wide-open Republican contest, John McCain pressed to build on his New Hampshire win and named experience, knowledge and judgment as his calling cards in the races ahead.

Clinton pored over election strategy in the first blush of her surprising success and indicated she'd compete in every big Democratic contest coming up this month rather than try to cherry-pick her way to the nomination.

"I'm going to keep going as we take on all the rest of the contests between now and February 5th," she said, back home in New York to "get grounded and take a deep breath" after a victory that surprised her own campaign, confounded the pollsters and shocked nearly everyone else. Two dozen states

vote Feb. 5.

Obama responded not just to his Democratic rival's New Hampshire primary win but to attacks on him by her husband, former President Clinton.

"I think that Senator Clinton, obviously, is a formidable and tough candidate, and we have to make sure that we take it to them just like they take it to us," the Illinois senator said.

"I come from Chicago politics. We're accustomed to rough and tumble."

Obama is bidding for resurgence in South Carolina and in the early Nevada Caucus on Jan. 19.

In Nevada, Obama has a good start having received the endorsement of the 60,000-member Culinary Workers Union local the day after New Hampshire's primary, and he has the additional backing of the Nevada chapter of the Service Employees International Union.

Bill Clinton complained in New Hampshire that Obama was getting a free

pass from the scrutiny turned on Hillary Clinton and likened the Illinois senator's campaign to a "fairy tale." Obama shot back saying, "...The real fairy tale is, I think, Bill Clinton suggesting somehow that we've been just taking a cakewalk here."

The victories for McCain and Clinton were evidence of New Hampshire's prickly habit of rejecting those chosen by Iowa voters a few days earlier and raised the prospect of a drawn-out nomination battle between two history-making candidates: Clinton, who would be the first woman to hold the presidency, and Obama, who would be the first president of African-American descent.

Third place on the Democratic side went to former Sen. John Edwards, who said he would not drop out.

Instead, Edwards hoped to keep the race a three-way contest.

"Two races down, 48 states left to go," he declared.

Culinary

(Continued from Page 1) vada and South Carolina to focus on Feb. 5 states.

In a sign that Clinton was, at least for now, still in the fight, her Nevada campaign came up with a counterpunch to the Culinary announcement.

Democratic Rep. Shelley Berkley announced her support of Clinton on a conference call with reporters. Berkley, who represents Las Vegas, and Nevada Sen. Harry Reid, had said they would stay neutral.

The unions' decisions are a blow to former Sen. John Edwards, who finished third in New Hampshire and is struggling to prevent a two-person race between Obama and Clinton.

Edwards had attempted to position himself as the labor candidate in a state where nearly two-thirds of Democratic voters are union members.

With labor now split, Edwards is outmaneuvered by the better-funded Obama and Clinton operations. He has not yet run television ads here, while Clinton and Obama have been airing positive, introductory commercials for three weeks.

Aides say Edwards plans



Culinary Union Secretary D. Taylor addresses members.

to spend most of his time in the next week campaigning in South Carolina, the state where he was born, ahead of its Jan. 26 Democratic primary.

The role of unions is amplified by the expectation that relatively few caucusgoers will show up in Nevada, a previously irrelevant contest that has never played a significant role in picking the nominee. Even among Democrats who say they are engaged in the race, many don't know what a caucus is or why Nevada's matters.

State party officials and

campaigns are not expecting more than 10 percent of registered Democrats, around 45,000 people, to participate.

Awareness is even spottier on the Republican side. The Nevada Republican Party's Jan 19 caucus has been overshadowed by the Republican primary in South Carolina on the same day. The GOP field has given Nevada little attention.

New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson's camp has announced the end to his presidential bid following poor showing in both Iowa and New Hampshire.

Georgia inmates claim violence victimization

ATLANTA (AP) - A group of prisoners has filed a class-action lawsuit contending that Georgia corrections officers have systematically beaten restrained inmates in prisons throughout the state, leaving two dead and dozens of others injured.

The lawsuit, filed this week in U.S. District Court in Valdosta, names 25 guards and other corrections officials as culprits in routine beatings and torture of restrained inmates. It also claims they subsequently covered up the abuses by inflicting even more beatings on prisoners who file complaints.

Seven Valdosta State Prison inmates claim in court documents that members of the prison's response team kicked them with combat boots, choked them with night sticks and donned black leather "beating gloves" to carry out the attacks between October 2005 and August 2007.

The lawsuit also mentions the cases of more than 40 inmates in other Georgia prisons who claim, among other abuses, that guards strapped inmates to iron beds and left them without food or water for as long as two days and banned beating victims from seeing family members or being photographed.

Most of the incidents allegedly took place between 2003 and 2005.

Paul Czachowski, a spokesman for the

state's corrections system, said there is a "pending investigation" into the Valdosta State Prison. He declined further comment until he saw the lawsuit.

The beatings have become a "very ingrained brutal practice that is covered up by the guards, supervisors, wardens and medical personnel," said McNeill Stokes, an Atlanta defense attorney who filed the lawsuit.

The lawsuit seeks an immediate end to the beatings and compensation for victims.

Stokes has filed more than 40 lawsuits during the last few years contending the beatings are banned by the Georgia Constitution, which says "neither banishment beyond the limits of the state nor whipping shall be allowed as a punishment for a crime."

The lawsuit alleges that two prisoners — Charles "Chad" Clark and Jonathan Haynes — have died as a result of the beatings.

Clark died April 19, 2005, of cardiac arrest after he was beaten, shot with pepper spray, dragged across the floor and left bleeding in a restraint for hours, the lawsuit said. Haynes, an inmate at Autry State Prison, fell unconscious when officers threw him into a wall, and the next day — Oct. 14, 2004 — he was pronounced dead, it said.

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