

## Extra Feature Story

### **Obama Solidifies Delegate Lead after N.C., Indiana Primaries**

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**Senator Barack Obama cruised to a double-digit victory in North Carolina while Senator Hillary Clinton won by a razor-thin margin in Indiana, raising questions about Clinton's prospects in the race for the nomination.**

Obama won North Carolina by a margin of 56 percent to 42 percent. Clinton won Indiana with 51 percent of the vote to Obama's 49 percent.

The "results solidified the status quo in the Democratic race," the Washington Post reported, leaving Obama with a clear advantage because of his lead in delegates.

Others saw it as an important step forward for Obama, and proof that he could weather recent controversies that have plagued his campaign.

"Once Obama won big tonight in North Carolina, he stopped her momentum train and picked up some serious steam of his own," Jenny Backus, a Democratic strategist not affiliated with either campaign told Bloomberg News.

Obama secured the support of at least another 94 delegates to the convention in Denver this summer, moving him within 200 delegates of the nomination, according to the Associated Press. Clinton won the support of at least 75 delegates.

Both campaigns said they would carry on, taking aim at the 28 delegates at stake May 13 in West Virginia.

#### **Racial divide**

The win in North Carolina was Obama's first since remarks made by his former pastor that were seen as unpatriotic and inflammatory made the rounds on YouTube and the nightly news.

Nearly half of Indiana voters in the primary said the coverage of the pastor's comments affected their vote. Clinton won about 60 percent of the white vote

In North Carolina, which has a much larger African-American population, Obama won more than 90 percent of the black voters and 40 percent of white voters.

#### **Michigan and Florida**

Even without a win in North Carolina, Clinton vowed to continue "full speed to the White House."

The campaign is intensifying pressure on party leaders to include results from the disqualified primaries of Michigan and Florida.

Both states violated Democratic Party rules by holding their primaries too early in the year. The states had hoped to increase their influence on the nomination but were punished by the party, which said before the vote that it would not count their delegates at the convention.

Clinton "won" both states, but neither candidate campaigned in the states. The Obama campaign has said the results are not an accurate reflection of what a real vote in the states would be, as he did not even appear on the Michigan ballot.

If all of the delegates were counted, Clinton would add 50 to her total. The Democratic National Committee will take up the matter of Michigan and Florida at the end of May.

### **A unified party?**

Many Democrats worry a prolonged primary will weaken the candidates going into the November election against Republican John McCain.

Both Obama and Clinton used their victory speeches Tuesday night to try to assuage those fears.

"Tonight, many of the pundits have suggested that this party is inalterably divided - that Senator Clinton's supporters will not support me, and that my supporters will not support her," Obama said. "Well I'm here tonight to tell you that I don't believe it."

Clinton spoke about the importance of a unified Democratic Party defeating the Republican nominee in the fall.

"No matter what happens, I will work for the nominee of the Democratic Party because we must win this November," Clinton said.

### **Economic worries**

The one trend that has continued to build is growing concern about the struggling American economy. Some two-thirds of voters in Indiana and North Carolina cited the economy as their primary issue— twice as many as in earlier contests.

One voter, Republican Mark Dexter, told the Indianapolis Star that Clinton's proposal to lift the 18-cent federal gas tax was a major reason for voting for her.

"Gas prices are totally out of line... From what I can see, there's absolutely no excuse for it.," Dexter said. "I'm a Republican. I'm just not at all happy with the current administration. Something has got to be done."

**-- Compiled by Talea Miller for NewsHour Extra**

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