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## Obama has Illinois, but what to do with it?

Photos



**AP**  
 Democratic presidential hopeful, Sen. Barack Obama D-Ill., boards his plane with his wife in Chicago, Ill. Tuesday, June 3, 2008. Obama clinches the Democratic nomination, making him the first black candidate to lead his party.

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**By Bernard Schoenburg**  
**GateHouse News Service**

Posted Jun 03, 2008 @ 09:00 PM

Last update Jun 03, 2008 @ 09:05 PM

SPRINGFIELD — Illinois may not see much campaigning by the contenders for president this year, even though one of them is from the Land of Lincoln.

“The people of Illinois know Barack Obama very well, and between now and November, I would expect Barack Obama to be concentrating on the states that don’t know him as well, that he needs to win to become the president of the United States,” Tim Timoney, chairman of Sangamon County Democrats, said Tuesday.

Obama, a Chicagoan in his first six-year term in the U.S. Senate, announced his presidential campaign on the Old State Capitol grounds in February 2007. On Tuesday, he locked up the Democratic nomination.

Timoney said he thinks U.S. Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., the Republican presidential candidate, “has no hope of winning Illinois,” so time or advertising dollars spent here would be “a waste of time and resources” for him.

Tony Libri, chairman of the Sangamon County GOP, conceded that an Obama win in Illinois is “likely as of today’s date,” but as the Democratic primary campaign dragged on, he added, Obama moved away from being seen as “unbeatable.”

“That armor’s been dented quite a bit,” Libri said, and things can continue to change before the Nov. 4 election.

“Illinois still has a lot of Republicans,” he said, and many people in the state are unhappy with the way Democrats have been running the governor’s office and the General

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Just as former Gov. George Ryan, a Republican doing prison time for corruption, created what some saw as a “perfect storm” that helped Democrats get elected in Illinois, Libri said he thinks the GOP could now be helped by legal troubles including the corruption trial of Antoin “Tony” Rezko, a fundraiser for Gov. Rod Blagojevich who also helped raise money for Obama.

“It appears that a perfect storm is brewing again, but just going in the opposite direction,” Libri said. “I think it might offset some of Obama’s strengths.”

But Timoney said he thinks Obama will have “some large coattails” that will also affect local races, and he predicted that problems on the state level are “going to be overshadowed by the excitement that Barack Obama brings.” He noted that large numbers of Democratic voters turned out in the February primary.

Not all Democrats think Obama will be scarce in his home state.

Steve Brown, spokesman for Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan, chairman of the Democratic Party of Illinois, said he thinks Obama could use the diverse areas of the state as backdrops for campaign events. Illinois would provide “tons of people” willing to help put a good face on the campaign, Brown said. He agreed that Obama would not have to buy paid advertising in the state, because he would have “a lot of earned media attention.”

Chris Mooney, professor of political science at the Institute of Government and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois at Springfield, said it appears clear that Obama and McCain will both know that Illinois is in the Obama column. He said Illinois has been moving “pretty heavily” to the Democratic side in recent presidential elections.

“I think Illinois would have been out of it even if (U.S. Sen.) Hillary (Clinton, D-N.Y.) would have won” the Democratic nomination, Mooney said.

He said Democrats will likely paint McCain as another George W. Bush, and the majority of Illinois voters won’t go in that direction. Bush lost Illinois with less than 43 percent of the vote in 2000 and less than 45 percent in 2004.

Mooney also predicted that Obama “will energize all sorts of the Democrats in the state,” so down-ballot races could be affected. He said Illinois is known for its “very practical” politics, with concerns like, “Who can get the job for their idiot brother-in-law.”

“So it’s basically who wins,” Mooney said. “It’s not about a battle of the minds. ... Even if there’s not a lot of jobs to go with it, it’s just ... he’s our team, and the team aspect of politics in Illinois ... is stronger than it is in a lot of places.”

“I think it’s very clear that we’re going to find very little campaign advertising for the national ticket on either side” in Illinois, Mooney said.

Timoney said there also will be a home-town pride fueling Illinois efforts for Obama.

“He’s been to many of our events,” Timoney said of the Democratic candidate. “He knows many of us by first name. It’s sort of a surreal feeling to think that someone that we know on a personal level is just steps away from possibly being president of the United States.”

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*Libri is whistling past the graveyard if he thinks the Illinois GOP is poised to make a comeback this fall. Remember that Su Levine, the chief Rezko witness, is a Republican. Names of other GOP fixers also came up in the trial. So the GOP is in no position to throw stones, esp. since the last Republican governor is still behind bars.*

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For a man who 'gave away' the Panama Canal, Jimmy Carter should keep quiet about any other politicians short comings. I'm an Independent and have watched disturbed in the last few years, to the fact that Communist China has heavily invested in this sea passage that joins the two oceans. Ferdinand de Lesseps built this marvel and now has become a security risk to America. Carter Ultra Liberal disguised as a Democrat should stay in the shadows, and not demonize Hillary Clinton on anybody else about any issue.

Nor should the Bush Administration, who have tried to sell port infrastructure, interstate highways and airlines to foreign governments and financial speculators. Even today as Obama and McCain enter the final race, both are liable to sell cheap labor in the form of AMNESTY. Hopefully both potential candidates will care about the legal citizens of the country and not be another puppet to big business. American taxpayers cannot afford to subsidize the world anymore. Our military is stretched thin, trying to nation build for Bush and police the world. I want my taxes to support the border wall, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to police our fence, instead of us funding a Israeli Palestinian wall.

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