



**Clinton Campaign Accuses Obama of Breaking Word**  
**Team Clinton Says Obama Flipped on Public Money for General Election Contest**  
By Kate Snow, Eloise Harper, David Wright, and Sunlen Miller  
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The Clinton campaign says Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., is breaking his word by refusing to commit to taking public financing, should he become the Democratic nominee.

On a conference call Sunday afternoon with reporters, Clinton communications director Howard Wolfson accused Obama of going back on a pledge they say he made last year, to participate in public financing if the Republican opponent would also agree to do so.

"He was very clear. There was no hedging," Wolfson said. "And recently, Sen. Obama has decided to go back on this pledge. He broke his pledge. It now appears that he made a promise to the American people that he's not keeping, and that is wrong. And it's certainly not change you can believe in."

The Obama campaign, meantime, called the whole thing an artificial argument over a position that, they argue, has been consistent.

On their own conference call with reporters, Sunday, Obama spokesman Bill Burton said he didn't understand why the Clinton campaign was attacking Obama on this, and said they didn't "need lectures" from the Clinton camp about campaign finance issues.

In a questionnaire for the Midwest Democracy Network, the details of which were released on Nov. 27, 2007, Sen. Obama was asked, "If you are nominated for president in 2008, and your major opponents agree to forgo private funding in the general election campaign, will you participate in a presidential public financing system?"

He answered, "Yes. I have been a long-time advocate for public financing of campaigns, combined with free television and radio time, as a way to reduce the influence of moneyed special interests."

But later, in his answer, he also said, "If I am the Democratic nominee, I will aggressively pursue an agreement with the Republican nominee to preserve a publicly financed general election."

Last week, Burton indicated that public financing was more of an "option" than a "pledge."

Then, at a press conference on Friday, Obama clarified his position.

"If I am the nominee, I will make sure our people talk to John McCain's people to find out if we are willing to abide by the same rules and regulations, with respect to the general election, going forward," said Obama.

"It would be presumptuous of me to start saying now that I am locking in to something, when I don't even know if the other side will agree to it. And I'm not the nominee yet. We're trying to get through this process. As soon as we do, I assure you, my folks and John McCain's folks will sit down and see if we can arrive at a common set of ground rules," Obama told reporters.

Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., has never said she would accept public financing if she were the Democratic nominee, even if the Republican candidate made that commitment.

"We have said we will assess the situation when we get to that point, and that has been our consistent position," said Wolfson.

Her campaign said today that their argument was "less about the specifics of the position, and more about making a pledge."

"Here is a very stark case in real time where Sen. Obama rhetorically said he would take public financing, and then, when the time comes to actually do it, he walks away from it," Wolfson said, coming dangerously close to declaring Obama the presumptive nominee.

In fact, on CBS' "Face The Nation," Sunday, Obama media strategist Jim Axelrod asked Wolfson that very question: "Are you ceding us the nomination?"

Wolfson and deputy communications director Phil Singer also suggested that it was not the first time Obama had changed his views for political expediency.

"Sen. Obama has a pattern of saying he'll do one thing, and then, when the circumstances change, he changes his mind," Wolfson said.

On the conference call, Singer and Wolfson also addressed why Clinton was ending her campaigning in Wisconsin, one day earlier than originally planned.

"Campaign schedules change all the time," Wolfson said, refusing to say whether falling poll numbers had anything to do with the decision to travel to Ohio on Monday night, and avoid being in Wisconsin on Tuesday — primary day.

"What you should take from this is, we are in a process in which states vote consecutively, fast on the heels of each other ... We have Texas and Ohio coming quick ... We have not extensively been in either state," said Wolfson.

He added that the Clinton campaign is doing what it can to be "competitive" in Wisconsin, but there was no talk of winning there.

Wolfson rejected the idea that a win for Obama in Wisconsin would be helpful in continuing Obama's momentum.

"I do not believe voters are going to base their votes for the presidency on an issue like momentum or previous votes," he said. "Momentum — it seems to me — is a good storyline, but it is not a good driver of actual votes."