

Political Experts Tell What Obama Must Do to Win Re-election

Written by Helen Trice Edney
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By Hazel Trice Edney

With eight Republican candidates determined to replace President Obama in the White House and the key issue - the economy - still looming, at least two political scientists say Obama is still likely to win – but only if he takes certain actions.

“He needs to rev up the message,” says Dr. Wilmer Leon, Howard University political science professor. “Right now, what’s missing is he needs surrogates carrying the message for him.”

Leon specifically named Vice President Joe Biden, First Lady Michelle Obama, Sen. Barbara Boxer, Sen. Dianne Feinstein, and Debbie Wasserman Schultz as among democratic heavy weights who are well able to strengthen the president’s message among voters.

“They need to be on board and I don’t know why they’re not. What’s missing right now is a cohesive message and a message that speaks to a longer term strategy,” Leon says. “He needs to have more of his representatives out there until he moves out of the presidential mode into the campaign mode.”

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David Bositis, a senior analysis for the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, agrees that the greatest deficiency of the Obama administration is that it has failed to communicate its successes – especially in the Black community.

“He never claims credit for what he’s done. He did as much as he could for jobs in the stimulus,” Bositis said. Just as one example, the health care bill, his first major legislation, affected more African-Americans and Latino-Americans because they are primarily the ones without health insurance, Bositis pointed out.

Two major strengths of the Obama campaign are experience and his ability to raise funds, Bositis says.

“His campaign is very professional, they’re going to go after whoever the Republican nominee is, they’ve received donations way beyond anyone else, they’ve been opening offices all over the country, they’re all over social media. And they know how to do this, they’ve done it before,” said Bositis.

At last count, Obama and the Democratic National Committee had raised more than \$70.1 million for his campaign. This out paces all Republican candidates. Former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney and Texas Gov. Rick Perry have raised only

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id=mce_marker7 million respectively.

Some political observers have speculated that the President, who has undergone harsh scrutiny from Republicans – and some Black activists, such as Tavis Smiley and Cornel West – may lose some Black votes this time around. But, Bositis scoffs at this.

“It’s baloney,” he says, describing the criticism from Smiley and West. “He’s as favored to win right now as anybody else; probably more so.”

Bositis, among the foremost experts on Black politics, said he recently spoke to groups of Black ministers and an NAACP audience and received boisterous applause when he criticized Smiley and West.

With former Godfather’s Pizza CEO Herman Cain running neck-in-neck with Romney, some have also speculated Cain could shave Black votes from Obama if he got the nomination.

“There is no Herman Cain factor,” says Bositis, noting that the Republican Party would never give the nomination to someone as unpredictable as Cain. “The press uses tons of ink writing about these people who are not going anywhere. The nomination fight is between Romney and Perry.”

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Political observers have predicted the economy and jobs – which have disparately affected African-Americans - will be the number one issue in the 2012 election. President Obama's current jobs bill was rejected by the Senate. It's now being reconsidered piece by piece.

But, Bositis believes President Obama's foreign policy successes will draw major support from voters, especially considering the deaths of Al Qaeda kingpin Osama Bin Laden and now the death of former Libyan leader Col. Muammar Qaddafi.

"Presidents don't control the economy. He's been brilliant on foreign policy. Compared to Bush, and Chaney and Rumsfeld, he's been a brilliant commander-in-chief," Bositis says.

But, the race will be a major challenge – even compared to his first election, says Leon.

At first it was clear what he meant when he said, "Change you can believe in." Leon said. "Now, he's almost running against himself." {jcomments on}