

# National Journal

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**CLINTON TO THE DELEGATES:** "I want you to ask yourselves: 'Were you in this campaign just for me?'"

## A Marriage Of the Head

Hillary Clinton issues a **vigorous call for party unity**, after Mark Warner frames a "race for the future."

By Ronald Brownstein

Hillary Rodham Clinton delivered a forceful plea for party unity on a night that Democrats repeated some familiar lines of attack against John McCain and opened a new one.

After an exuberant, emotional, sign-waving ovation, Clinton offered the message that the Obama campaign sought just moments into her speech. "Whether you voted for me, or you voted for Barack, the time is now to unite as a single party with a single purpose," she declared. "We are on the same team, and none of us can afford to sit on the sidelines."

Firm and vigorous, but somewhat reserved, Clinton refashioned the core themes of her presidential campaign into a call for her supporters to surmount their disappointment over her defeat in this spring's epic Democratic nomination fight. "I want you to ask yourselves: Were you in this campaign just for me?" she said. "Or ... were you in it for all the people in this country who feel invisible?"

For those Clinton supporters who longed for an emotional catharsis, the speech offered (Turn to p. 12)

## A Scarlet L, Worn With Pride

By Bara Vaida



"Remember when you were in grade school and you read

the book *The Scarlet Letter*?" lobbyist Heather Podesta says to Rep. Joe Courtney of Connecticut. Podesta points to a scarlet "L" patch affixed to her green Alberta Ferretti dress.

Courtney, a guest at Heather and husband Tony Podesta's jam-packed Monday brunch at Denver's Bistro Vendome, nods quizzically.

"The main character, Hester Prynne, had to wear a big letter A," says Podesta, the owner of lobbying firm Heather Podesta + Partners. "So we thought we'd have a little fun with that, given the current environment for lobbyists. This 'L' is a scarlet letter for lobbyists."



HONARI ZIT

Courtney laughs. "Oh, OK," says the lawmaker, one of more than two dozen Democratic members of Congress (including House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Henry Waxman of California and Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Carl Levin of Michigan) who stopped by the power couple's event. "Good sense of humor."

Whether it's the Podestas' humor, the dinner parties that the couple host at their home in Northwest Washington, D.C., or the \$3 million they have helped to raise for Democrats and party committees during this election cycle, Heather and Tony are among the more (Turn to p. 37)

## Tricks of Podium Science

By James A. Barnes

Rod O'Connor's job here in Denver requires the command presence of a submarine skipper and the agility of a Super Bowl quarterback calling an audible at the 10-yard line.

He's the podium scheduler, recruited to that post after running the entire Democratic National Convention in Boston four years ago. Even though buddies nicknamed him "CEO Emeritus," O'Connor has big shoes to fill because Mike Berman controlled the podium so well for so long—for six Democratic conventions, in fact. Berman was podium honcho in 1976, 1980, and 1992 through 2004.

During the run-up to this convention, (Turn to p. 37)



# The Magic of Podium Manipulation

(From p. 1) O'Connor and Berman talked frequently about how to keep the program on schedule even though prominent pols don't always stick to their scripts. "I gave him my little tricks," Berman said.

Sure enough, at 5:45 p.m. on Tuesday one of Berman's little tricks was put to good use. When an assistant informed O'Connor that the program was running a bit over its allotted time, O'Connor said, "We'll be using some of the 'pad' this hour."

Berman had recommended padding the convention schedule—building some dead time into each hour that only the podium-meister and a handful of other producers are aware of. Such details are typically shared with the television networks' senior producers so they can plan their coverage accordingly.

"If you get into that last hour and you're on time, you've got a pretty good chance of getting done what you need to get done," O'Connor said. And that's why it's so important to keep the trains



JAMES A. BARNES

**O'CONNOR:** The podium scheduler.

running on time earlier in the day.

Another Berman pointer: It's important for the convention's scheduler to maintain credibility with the networks so that they will have confidence in the coverage plans they draw for each night.

"There's a dialogue between the convention planners and the televi-

sion network producers. And a part of that dialogue is who's going to speak when. Keeping that dialogue open and managing the time so you can have the people at the podium when you say they're going to be there is very important. And Mike Berman taught me that," O'Connor said.

There are times when the scheduler has to deliver disappointing news to some pretty important political figures. "If you're running late or if something comes up that causes the schedule to go over, you're the person who goes up to someone and says, 'You're not speaking tonight,'" O'Connor said. "That has not happened at this convention, but it usually happens once or twice."

At the 2000 convention in Los Angeles, Berman recalled, Senate Democrats had been given half an hour of podium time one night, but two members from "the cave of winds" ran over their allotted minutes. Berman had to tell then-Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle that his speaking slot had just vanished.

"He was irritated at the moment," Berman says. "He's been a sweetheart about it ever since."

Convention CEO Leah Daughtry asked Berman whether he wanted a seventh tour of podium duty. He declined. "I've had a good run," said Berman, 69. "There comes a time when other people deserve a chance to have all the fun that I've had."

So what is Berman doing during convention week? Vacationing in California.

But on Monday at 2 p.m. Pacific time, Berman propped his feet up in his suite at the Four Seasons Hotel in San Francisco and did something very unusual for him: watched a Democratic convention on television.

"I called [Berman] at the beginning of this convention, and I said it was strange to be doing one of these things without him sitting next to us," O'Connor said. "I've come to this conversion. I'm not known as a former CEO. I'm known as the new Mike Berman. And that's OK with me." ■

## Heather's Scarlet L

(From p. 1) popular figures in Denver this week.

Yes, the Obama campaign has been pounding away relentlessly with anti-lobbyist rhetoric. And new congressional ethics rules have turned every lobbyist into a persona non grata at this convention. Still, hundreds of well-known Democratic movers and shakers would not miss the chance to see and be seen at a Podesta soiree.

The events in Denver have included a Sunday evening reception that they co-hosted, as well as a fundraiser for Barack Obama; brunches on Monday and Tuesday at Bistro Vendome; a book party today for Tony's brother, John, a former Clinton White House chief of staff; and a series of small dinners with Democratic governors.

"I don't think of Tony as a lobbyist," Rep. Anna Eshoo of California says at the Monday brunch. "I think of him as a friend."

Tony Podesta, 64, runs a very successful lobbying firm, the Podesta Group, which posted \$7.2 million in fees for the first half of 2008. He is a fixture in Democratic politics and has been volunteering, fundraising, and generally toiling for party candidates for decades. Heather Podesta, 38, has been in the lobbying business for fewer years, but she cut her teeth in

Democratic politics while working on Capitol Hill and then at the law and lobbying firm Blank Rome. She opened her own lobbying shop in early 2007; it posted \$2.23 million in fees for the first half of the year.

The couple invited *National Journal* to join them for a day of whirlwind events and a taste of the lobbyists' world at a convention. For Heather and Tony, most of their day involves being chauffeured to numerous events in a Lincoln Town Car, shaking hands, hugging people (including lawmakers, Hill staff, and Democratic officials), and making small talk. When they aren't being driven around, they are hosting events. All in all, the couple estimates they will spend between \$25,000 and \$50,000 during convention week.

Beyond schmoozing, they act as concierges, making sure their clients attending the convention have opportunities to meet with elected officials and experience a week of fun, including invitations to cool events.

"Money doesn't work here," Heather says. "That isn't the currency. It's passes, credentials, and invitations."

On Monday, the Podestas had plenty of "currency," including tickets to party events and convention hall skyboxes with Sen. Charles Schumer



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**HEATHER AND TONY PODESTA:** The D.C. lobbyists are popular entertainers in Denver.

of New York and members of the Colorado Democratic Party.

For both Podestas, who were major supporters of Hillary Rodham Clinton, coming to Denver was a no-brainer. The opportunities to network and help clients are keys to continued business success. Further, both say they are now supporting Obama. Being in Denver is an important way to show their support.

"My mother raised me to be a good Democrat," says Tony, who is known for wearing suspenders and red shoes. (He brought five pairs to Denver.)

The colorful couple is also known for being accessible to the media. Members of the press were invited to several of their parties, unlike other insiders who have barred reporters from their Denver events.

Asked about her press-friendly attitude, Heather Podesta says: "We are leading a very public life. People know who we work for, how much we get paid, and who we give money to."

Is it helpful if news stories report on the lawmakers who come to their parties? Heather Podesta shrugs. "That's up to our clients to decide." ■