

## Poll: Obama trouncing Clinton in Oregon

*Illinois senator leading former first lady 55-35*

**BY STEVE LAW**

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A bit more than a week away from Oregon's May 20 primary, Barack Obama has amassed a nearly insurmountable lead in the Democratic presidential race, according to statewide polling conducted by Portland's Davis, Hibbitts & Midghall Inc. for the Portland Tribune and FOX 12 News.

The U.S. senator from Illinois leads Hillary Clinton by a commanding 55 percent to 35 percent margin among likely Democratic voters, and even leads among women voters who ordinarily tilt toward Clinton, said Tim Hibbitts of Davis, Hibbitts & Midghall. The poll was conducted May 8-10, during and after visits to Oregon by Obama and Clinton.



FILE PHOTOS / PORTLAND TRIBUNE  
Sens. Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton are locked in a battle for the Oregon Democratic primary election. A new poll shows Obama way ahead in the state.

"Barring a disaster, Barack Obama's going to win Oregon, and he may win it very big," said Hibbitts, one of Oregon's most respected nonpartisan pollsters. "This is the widest lead that I've seen of any poll for Obama in Oregon," he said. "I'd be shocked if Obama didn't win here."

Clinton's slim hopes of gaining the Democratic nomination could rely on sweeping all six remaining primaries, Hibbitts said. Oregon's May 20 primary could prove crucial in the nominating battle if Clinton wins, as expected, in West Virginia tonight and Kentucky on May 20.

"Obama needs a counterbalancing win, and Oregon looks like it's here to provide it for him," Hibbitts said.

That could give Obama an important psychological advantage as he tries to woo remaining uncommitted superdelegates, Hibbitts said. Those are elected officials and party insiders who are awarded automatic votes at the Democrats' nominating convention this summer.

The poll results and recent events suggest this could be Oregon's most influential presidential primary in 40 years, when Robert Kennedy and Eugene McCarthy were fighting for the Democratic nomination, Hibbitts said.

Davis, Hibbitts & Midghall Inc. interviewed 400 likely Democratic voters across the state. Its poll has a margin of error of 4.8 percentage points, meaning the numbers could be off by that amount in either direction.

Results showed that Obama's lead over Clinton, the former first lady and a U.S. senator from New York, was similar in Portland, in the rest of the Willamette Valley, and in the rest of the state.

Clinton enjoys the sympathies of more Democratic voters over 55, the poll showed. But Obama is crushing her among voters 18 to 34 and 35 to 54. In both age groups, Obama leads by more than 2-to-1, according to poll results.

"Right now Obama's winning across the board," Hibbitts said. "He's winning by 11 points among women; He's leading by 30 points among men."

Obama's reputation among Democratic voters aged 18 to 34 is off the charts. Among that group, a whopping 86 percent said they held favorable views of Obama, versus only 1 percent who said they had unfavorable views. In comparison, 68 percent of those voters had favorable views about Clinton, versus 13 percent with unfavorable views.

Not surprisingly, the poll showed Oregon Democrats don't hold President Bush in high regard.

Among all age groups, 75 percent of Democrats had "very unfavorable" views about Bush and 9 percent had "somewhat unfavorable" views. Only 11 percent had favorable views.

Presumed Republican nominee John McCain has more support among Oregon Democrats. About 22 percent held favorable views about the Arizona senator, while 32 percent held "very unfavorable" views and 27 percent had "somewhat unfavorable views."

Democrat Stephen Tollefson, a 57-year-old freelance writer from St. Johns, told pollsters he favors Obama.

"He seems fresh. He seems different. He seems intelligent," Tollefson said in a follow-up interview. "He doesn't seem to have as much political baggage and special-interest connections as the other candidates."

Tollefson said he doesn't trust Hillary Clinton, and blames her husband for paving the way for George Bush's election as his successor.

"I think she's an opportunistic politician who would say or do anything to get elected, and I think she and Bill Clinton had their chance at the White House and blew it," Tollefson said.

Ralph Griffin, 81, a retired heavy equipment operator who lives near David Douglas High in east Portland, told pollsters he favors Clinton in the primary.

"She has the experience and I can't go along with McCain," he said. "Obama's too new. He's had two years in the Senate and he didn't accomplish anything."

Mail-in ballots are due May 20 for Oregon's primary. As of mid-day Monday, 271,065 Oregonians had cast ballots, about 13 percent of the electorate. That includes Democrats, Republicans and unaffiliated voters.

### **Remaining Democratic primaries:**

May 13: West Virginia

May 20: Oregon and Kentucky

June 1: Puerto Rico

June 3: Montana and South Dakota