

ARIZONA SEN. COMES UP SHORT ON BIGGEST STAGE

Runner up praises Obama to assembled crowd in early night concession

BY MICHELLE CERONE
METRO EDITOR

PHOENIX — Though many of Sen. John McCain's supporters expressed disappointment as they watched his concession speech last night, the crowd in the Arizona Biltmore ballroom cheered their candidate on as he delivered his concession speech and congratulated Sen. Barack Obama.

"I'm not sure if disappointed is the right word," said Phoenix resident Ryan Jenkins, "Sadness maybe."

McCain began his speech by congratulating Obama and expressing his sorrow that the Chicago President-elect had lost his grandmother days before the election, before asking the country to unite.

"I urge all Americans who supported me, to join me in not just congratulating Sen. Obama but also in offering our next president our goodwill and earnest effort to find ways to come together, to find the necessary compromises to bridge our differences, to help restore our prosperity," McCain said as the crowd at the McCain election night watch party at the Biltmore cheered.

Jenkins said he felt McCain's speech had accomplished what it needed to, though he said the content was somewhat expected.

"I think it was what it had to be but I think he brought the whole party together," Jenkins said. "It was very good; it was very emotional."

But despite McCain's call for unity, many at the party expressed their concerns about what an Obama presidency would mean, particularly for their small businesses.

Business owner and Arizona resident Tony Smith said an Obama presidency would change the way small business was done in America. Smith owns a construction company and fears Obama will increase taxes on his company, forcing him to cut corners and lay off workers.

"Let me tell you, God help the small businesses," Smith said. "I am truly afraid of what he is going to do."

Republicans believe in growing the economy from helping small businesses hire people, said Barry Greenberg of Scottsdale, Ariz.

But after the stock market tanked, Greenberg said people began to blame the Republicans.

But Greenberg said he thinks Obama's plans to spread the wealth by increasing taxes will hurt the American economy.

"When the economy is down you don't kick it in the teeth," he said.

Bridget McDermott of Flagstaff, Ariz., who attends Northern Arizona University, said she supported McCain for his support of small businesses; something she said she feels is vital to keeping the American dream alive.

"Our country is known for being the land of opportunity," she said.

McDermott said she fears Obama will raise taxes on small business, and force them to provide costly health care plans to employees, forcing them to raise commodity prices or go out of business.

"And then a lot of people will be out of jobs," McDermott said.

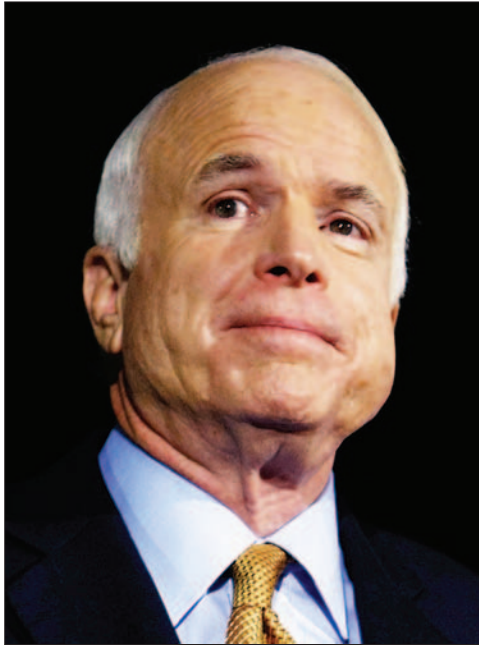
She bucked the trend of first time voters, 72 percent of whom voted for Obama according to CNN exit polls.

Flagstaff tends to be more liberal, McDermott said but she thinks her friends haven't looked as deeply into the issues but are attracted by Obama's youth and hipness.

"I don't feel they are really looking into the topics or looking into the long term consequences," McDermott said.

McCain admitted during his speech that difference between the candidates had not subsided because of Obama's victory.

"Sen. Obama and I have had and argued our differences and he has prevailed. No



JOHN MCCAIN

doubt that many of these differences remain. These are difficult times for our country," McCain said.

But his supporters also had lingering concerns about Obama as a leader.

"You don't know anything about him. He hasn't stood for anything. He's come out of nowhere," said Phoenix resident and business owner Terry Reiber.

Samuel McLean of Phoenix said he is concerned about an Obama presidency.

"He talks so much about judgment that in the event of an actual crisis, such as a national security issue, he won't know what to do," McLean said.

Greenberg said he was concerned there would be no checks and balances with a democratic majority in Congress and a Democratic president.

When the government officials were divided between the parties, he said, they were able to play off of each other, but in a government controlled by Democrats, legislation, he said, would be pushed through without any input from the public.

"I am not going to be thrilled about it but you got to hope and pray this guy knows what he's doing," Greenberg said.

Supporters held out hope until the end, even as closing polls put Obama in the lead. Arizona resident Dennis King didn't even know he would be attending the Republican election night party until the night before the election. The McCain supporter won his tickets to the party on Monday, from a local conservative radio station.

King said he supported McCain because of his pro-life stance, as well as his views on the economy and energy.

He remained optimistic about the Arizona senator's change, just before the polls began closing, despite ballots placing Obama squarely in the lead.

"It was the same situation with [Al] Gore and [John] Kerry," he said of previous polls, which had predicted a Democratic victory in the last two elections.

King also believed in vice presidential nominee Sarah Palin, who he believes would have made a great vice president.

In his concession, McCain thanked Palin, who he called a great campaigner, as well as her family. He also acknowledged his supporters.

"But your support and friendship never wavered," McCain said.

And despite the loss, many supporters said they were proud of their candidate and optimistic about the future of the party.

"We're Republicans. We're Americans and in four years we'll try again," Jenkins said. "I just think as a country we need to come together, Republicans and Democrats."

But he said the party needs to return to its conservative values and work to keep the country from going down a path too far to the left.

But regardless of the loss, Jenkins said he was still honored McCain was the senator of his state.

"He has been my senator for a very long time and I am very proud of him," Jenkins said. "He ran a good campaign."

McLean said he is proud to support a war hero, despite McCain's loss, though McLean said he felt the loss was expected.

"I think that [the Republicans] just need to work on regaining the trust of the American people," McLean said.

McLean thinks McCain's vision of changing the tone of politics in Washington can still become a reality with or without becoming president.

And despite his loss, McCain said no association meant more to him than his association as an American.

"Let there be no reason now for any American to fail to cherish their citizenship for this is the greatest nation on earth," McCain said.

In final month, economic woes helped to doom McCain

BY JOHN CLYDE
ASSOCIATE NEWS EDITOR

PHOENIX — The economy played the deciding factor for 62 percent of voters in the 2008 presidential election as Sen. John McCain was unable to overcome the economic record of Republican President George W. Bush.

The Republican candidate from Arizona had closed the gap in national polls following the selection of Alaskan Gov. Sarah Palin on Aug. 29, but following the collapse of Lehman Brothers, AIG and a \$700 billion federal bailout of investment banks, Sen. Barack Obama took a four point lead nationally in CNN's poll of polls.

It was a lead he would not relinquish.

With 82 percent of the votes in, Obama led McCain by 5 percent in the popular vote and had 338 electoral votes compared to McCain's 156.

At approximately 11:20 p.m. last night, McCain conceded the election.

McCain praised Obama for becoming the first black man to be elected president, but said he'd leave it to others to determine what caused his defeat.

"After Sarah Palin was nominated, McCain came out ahead by three or four points and he stayed ahead," said McCain supporter Barry Greenberg, a Scottsdale, Ariz., resident. "Then in September the economy and the stock market

crashed and people blamed it on the Republicans in office."

Obama hammered McCain for saying that the "fundamentals of our economy are strong," while McCain said Obama was putting politics over country by "phoning it in" to the Senate leading up to the first debate on Sept. 26.

McCain tried to redefine the economic debate leading up to the third and final debate on Oct. 15., seizing on an Obama statement to Samuel Joseph Wurzelbacher, a plumber from Holland, Ohio.

"When the economy is down you don't kick it in the teeth," Greenberg said. "McCain may have waited too long to talk about people like Joe."

Independent voter Samuel McLean, a Phoenix resident attending McCain's election night watch party in the Arizona Biltmore Ballroom, disagreed.

"Everyone would still realize the economy is in bad shape," he said. "They're not going to care what a plumber from Ohio says."

With four states too close to call, Obama picked up six of the states Bush won in 2000: Nevada, Colorado, Iowa, New Mexico, Virginia and Ohio.

With 82 percent of the votes counted over 106 million people cast their votes for Obama or McCain. After all the votes are counted, 2008 may be one of the highest voter turnout years in over 40 years.

McCain led among seniors 53 to 45 percent over Obama, but young

people, African Americans and Hispanics all favored Obama, according to Fox News exit polls.

Among first-time voters, Obama won 72 percent, according to CNN exit polls.

"Young people don't like the current state of things and are looking for a change," said Diana Lara, an Arizona State University junior majoring in nursing.

The Obama campaign did a good job of stirring up young voters through social networking sites like Facebook, said Arizona State University first-year student Derek Lull, representing the ASU College Republicans.

"People just getting out of college are looking to the future towards jobs and the outlook of the economy which is slumped right now," Lull said.

McCain may have waited too long to highlight Joe the Plumber, said ASU College Republican Victor Mai, a junior in the College of Education.

But he added that it helped close the polls because Joe the Plumber was a spitting image of average Americans.

African Americans and Hispanics also tipped the election in Obama's favor, according to exit polls.

In Virginia, a state Bush carried in 2004, Obama carried 92 percent of the African American vote, while McCain carried 60 percent of the white American vote, according to Fox News exit polls.

Bush carried New Mexico in 2004, but with 40 percent of the state's electorate now Hispanic, a

68 to 31 percent tilt towards Obama, according to Fox News exit polls, changed the state to blue.

Michael Pittman, a Phoenix resident, said the war and the economy were the top influences on his vote for president and the reasons voter turnout was high this year, after casting his vote for Obama.

"It's a historical election," Pittman said. "[People] are tired of the current state of things."

Despite McCain's loss, many supporters were still proud to have voted for him.

After hearing news organizations call Ohio, a state that no victorious Republican candidate has lost, for Obama, Mclean said the Republican Party needs to reconnect with the American people.

But he added, "I'm honored to have voted for a war hero like John McCain."

Many residents of McCain's home state said they voted for Obama because of the record of the Bush administration.

"Obama is our future," said Pam Nicholson, a Phoenix resident who voted at the Central United Methodist Church at the corner of North Central Avenue and East Palm Lane.

Unlike at other polling locations around the country, the Central United Methodist Church was operating smoothly yesterday morning.

Dorelyn Kunkel, a Phoenix resident, said it only took her 15 minutes to vote at that site.

The poor management of the war in Iraq motivated her to vote for Obama, Nicholson said.

Phoenix residents said they saw a difference between their senator and "candidate McCain."

"McCain was more forceful running for the president than he was [running for] the Senate," said Phoenix resident Mavis Youngman.

McCain fought harder because this was a tougher race than his elections for the Senate, Youngman said.

"People are really involved this year because we're in a variety of crisis, from the war to the economic crisis. So people who did not feel like they had to take action before now feel like they need to get more involved," said Kunkel, who voted for Obama.

Change defined election night from the start, as Obama became the first Democrat to carry Dixville Notch, N.H., whose votes are reported first every year.

Republicans at the McCain election night watch party said they were unsure where the Republican Party would go from here.

"I don't know who will lead the Republican Party moving forward," said Jean Daly, a Phoenix resident.

Palin and Mitt Romney would be excellent choices, Mclean said.

The College Republicans Lull and Mai said the next leader in the Republican Party could be an outsider because of the success of Obama and Palin.