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## Barack Obama's return: good or bad for Democrats?

By Juana Summers and Marc Levy

WASHINGTON (AP) - Nearly two years out of the White House, former President Barack Obama is facing another political test.

To the delight of many Democrats, he's stepped back into the fray that former presidents often try to avoid, campaigning for Democratic candidates ahead of the midterms and blasting the political culture of the Trump era. He attracted a large, adoring crowd this past week in Ohio and will be in Pennsylvania on Sept. 22 campaigning for Democratic Sen. Bob Casey.

But Obama's return poses challenges for both the former president and his party. For one, Obama has struggled to turn admiration for him into votes when he's not on the ballot. Democrats lost significant ground in the 2010 and 2014 midterms and his enthusiastic campaigning for Hillary Clinton didn't carry her across the finish line in 2016. Perhaps more importantly, Obama's public re-entry into politics could serve as a motivating factor for Republicans, potentially handing the GOP a gift at a time when they face an uphill battle to maintain their grip on Congress.

"This is perfect for us," said Rep. Lou Barletta, the Republican challenging Casey for the Senate seat. "It will energize Republicans as a reminder."

The former president will also "energize those blue-collar Democrats who worried about their jobs under Obama and went out to vote for Donald Trump," Barletta added.

For their part, Democrats say an Obama visit is a huge boon. Massive crowds give candidates and the party a chance to organize, update contact lists, motivate new donors and boost volunteerism.

Michael Halle, the campaign manager for Richard Cordray, the Democratic candidate for governor in Ohio, said Obama's visit sent a message about the stakes of the race, which could have implications for redistricting and voting rights in the future.

"First and foremost, it's important for the people who live in Ohio," he said. "But secondly, there are also significant national implications, and I think the (former) president weighed those in making the decision."

An aide to the former president said Obama is aware that he does not have a strong record of aiding Democrats in midterm elections and that his presence can have the effect of galvanizing Republican voters. The aide said Obama would take a strategic approach to the midterm races and pointed to the light footprint that the former president kept earlier in his post-presidency. That's when he recorded a get-out-the-vote robo-call for Democrat Doug Jones, rather than travel to Alabama to appear with Jones ahead of his upset Senate victory. The aide cast the decision as an example of how Obama could still lend his voice in a part of the country where he is less popular.

The aide lacked authorization to discuss publicly Obama's thinking and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Scott Mulhauser, who served as Vice President Joe Biden's deputy chief of staff during the 2012 election, said Obama left office as the "most admired man in the country, and his popularity has only increased since."

"Part of his success is being strategic in his approach to campaigning - coordinating with campaigns to maximize his impact and minimize any blowback, stumping where it makes sense and avoiding where it doesn't," Mulhauser said, noting Obama's role in the Jones campaign. "He's rightfully out on the trail for certain campaigns, taking a pass on others and recording calls and sending emails on behalf of those that want to use him and his popularity in a targeted manner."

In Pennsylvania, Obama returns to a state he carried twice but that swung to Trump in 2016. The state features critical contests for Congress and governor. Rep. Dwight Evans of Philadelphia, where Obama will campaign, said that the former president's presence will be important for his ability to motivate African-American voters, college-aged voters and the poor.

"I think that he can help Democrats, and I think it needs to be really targeted," Evans said.

Both African-Americans and college-age voters were crucial to Obama's victories in 2008 and 2012, and because Obama was the first black president, Evans said, "he can say some things to the African-American community that cannot be said by anybody else."

While in Philadelphia, Obama will fundraise for Senate Democrats in general and in particular, Casey, who was among Obama's earliest Senate backers when he sought the Democratic presidential nomination in 2008.

While Obama's full schedule is taking shape, aides say he is weighing how to best engage on behalf of Democratic candidates across the nation. Earlier this year, he endorsed more than 80 Democrats across more than a dozen states, and aides say a second wave of endorsements is expected this fall.

## Officer cleared in fatal shooting; body camera video shared

WINSTON-SALEM (AP) - A white North Carolina police officer has been cleared of wrongdoing in the fatal shooting of a black man prosecutors say kept reaching for a handgun during a traffic stop.

News outlets report Forsyth County District Attorney Jim O'Neill announced the clearing of Winston-Salem police Officer Dalton McGuire on Sept. 10. McGuire's body camera footage also was released.

Police say McGuire shot and killed 60-year-old Edward Van McCrae at a March traffic stop when the two fought and McCrae reached for a gun.

Footage shows McGuire yelling six times for McCrae to stop reaching for the weapon. McGuire is heard yelling "Don't make me do it," before firing four times at McCrae.

McGuire will return to active duty. McCrae family attorney John Vermitsky says they will sue for wrongful-death.



The Durham Committee held its 83rd Founder's Day Gala Aug 25, at the Durham Civic Center. The Committee honored Dr. Ingrid Wicker-McCree, top right, Director of Athletics at North Carolina Central University and architect Phil Freelon, above, were this year's honorees. At left, Prof. Melissa Harris-Perry was the keynote speaker. See photos on page 7.



## Black governor nominees become stars in bid for history

By Jesse J. Holland

WASHINGTON (AP) - It was a raucous scene that could have been backstage at a rock concert: camera flashes, fans clamoring for autographs, scowling bodyguards, reporters hungry for a scoop.

But the center of this attention wasn't Beyonce or the Rolling Stones. It was three black gubernatorial candidates who stood side by side in a throng of admirers, soaking up all that love.

If elected, Stacey Abrams of Georgia, Ben Jealous of Maryland and Andrew Gillum of Florida would give America its largest number of black governors ever. That historic possibility was not lost on them, or the black voters who hope to make that history happen, as they shared the stage at the Congressional Black Caucus' annual legislative conference this week.

"This moment, and the significance of it, won't seep in for some time from now," said Gillum, mayor of Tallahassee, and at 39 the youngest of the three.

"What this signals is not only the continued evolution of our country but the increasing recognition of diversity, not only of capacity but of backgrounds," said Abrams, 44, later.

Abrams, who could become the nation's first black female governor, is getting the most national attention. But all three were squired around the Washington Convention Center by black politicians who are strategizing ways to help on turnout, campaigning and fundraising.

Jealous, 45, faces the steepest challenge, down in polls against incumbent Republican Gov. Larry Hogan. Abrams and Gillum are running for open seats.

After the three spoke together on stage, Jealous listened attentively backstage as Democratic U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee of Texas laid out plans to help him with voter turnout and fundraising. Gillum, meanwhile, stood nearby shaking hands with other state elected officials and Abrams conducted a media interview.

"I believe what we see in this current electoral cycle is not going to stop," Abrams said. "We have more diversity in the candidates running and in the candidates winning and particularly for women of color. ... I'm proud to be part of a national trend and I think it's a trend that's becoming a permanent one for America."

None of them were heavy favorites in their primaries. Abrams is a longtime state official and former state House leader; Gillum has been a fixture of local Tallahassee politics since his college days; and Jealous is a former head of the NAACP and was a venture capitalist and activist before entering the governor's race last year.

Their historic primary wins - and the national attention it brought - will bring out Democratic voters who might not have voted in a midterm election otherwise, they said. Midterm elections typically draw fewer than half of those eligible to vote.

"I know we have people keep wanting to hedge on these races: 'Oh, you can win in the primary, but what happens in the general?'" Gillum said. "I honestly believe for all three of us, we are the best, and frankly, the most likely of the whole lot we were in to bring the kind of energy necessary in order to win states like ours."

The political trio seem comfortable together and readily quote one another in interviews. They also tease one another, as they did when they turned Abrams' observations about overcoming gender and racial barriers into jokes about their respective skin tones.

"I'm of a very rich brown hue," Abrams said.

"I'm richer," Gillum interrupted. "It's the only thing I'm rich in."

Jealous, who is biracial, smiled, then quipped: "No comment."

The three of them have known one another for many years, Jealous said. He met Abrams when they were both around 20 years old, he said, and they've known Gillum since he was about that same age.

"It's a special joy when you look to your left and look to your right and the people you see are the people you know and the people you trust," Jealous said.

P.B.S. Pinchback of Louisiana was the nation's first black governor during Reconstruction, serving from 1872 to 1873. The next would not come until 1990, when Douglas Wilder would be elected in Virginia. Deval Patrick was elected in 2007 and David Paterson served as New York governor from 2008 to 2010.

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