

## Clinton off, but who's on Obama veep list?

By Lisa Keen  
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One candidate who is almost certainly not on Barack Obama's vice presidential list is Hillary Clinton, Obama's chief rival for the Democratic Party presidential nomination. The Obama campaign released word this week that it was naming the campaign manager who Clinton fired in February as the chief of staff to whomever Obama chooses as his running mate.

The news emerged in a June 16 press release: Patti Solis Doyle would be "Chief of Staff to the Vice Presidential Nominee." It was a striking announcement for two reasons: One, because it carried a presumptuousness of choosing a potential vice president's key staffer; and two, because it signaled to Clinton that the Obama campaign had no interest in enticing her to take a running mate role.

At the same time, news media have given considerable credence to the rumor that former Senator Sam Nunn (D-Georgia) is on Obama's short list for the veep seat. That idea has gone over like a lead balloon in the LGBT community, where Nunn is best known as the man who led the charge to codify the ban on gays in the military.

Nunn was one of the key architects and most zealot proponents of codifying the military's ban on gays in 1993 during the first year of President Bill Clinton's first term in the White House. Nunn was serving as chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and orchestrated the opposition to Clinton's campaign promise to end the military's ban on gays.

At that time, Nunn also acknowledged to the *New York Times* he had asked two of his own aides to resign in the 1980s for being gay. Nunn told the *Times* he did so because of a Defense Department assessment that gays constituted a security risk and he added, to his credit, that he believed the security risk argument ought to be "rethought."

This month, Nunn told the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* that it's time to "rethink" the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, a statement that seemed carefully couched to soften his image among the Democratic Party's more gay progressive wing without changing a political position that he is largely credited with having championed.

*Washington Post* editorial writer Jonathan Capehart, who is gay, called Nunn "one of the most adamant opponents" of allowing gays to serve. Prominent gay Democratic activist David Mixner says Nunn would be a "disaster" for the ticket, as far as gays are concerned.

David Smith, vice president of policy and strategy for the Human Rights Campaign, which recently endorsed Obama, said he thinks there's almost no chance Obama will select Nunn. There are many reasons why that's so, said Smith, but added, "Clearly, Sam Nunn would inflame the [Democratic Party's] base – not just GLBT Americans."

Smith declined to say what, if anything, HRC communicated to the Obama campaign concerning the possibility of Nunn on the ticket, but he said he is aware of "many" LGBT people close to the Obama campaign who have "made their feelings known."

## **GOP side**

Patrick Sammon, president of Log Cabin Republicans, also expressed reticence to discuss the vice presidential possibilities in the rumor mill for presumptive Republican nominee John McCain's campaign. But he did offer that the organization would obviously be opposed to either Mitt Romney or Mike Huckabee.

Log Cabin actively opposed the presidential campaigns of both Romney and Huckabee and said, "Senator McCain would be making a mistake with either of those choices."

While Sammon was reluctant to suggest who the organization might support, he said he believes there is little likelihood McCain will seek out an ultra-conservative running mate.

"Social conservatives [in the Republican Party] have no choice" but to support McCain, said Sammon. "It's Barack Obama or John McCain, and contrary to what [Focus on the Family founder] James Dobson is angry about, social conservatives will vote for Senator McCain." Sammon said McCain will almost certainly select a running mate who maximizes his chances to attract independent voters.

Sammon said he also believes that McCain "has the potential to gain significantly more support" than the one in four votes President Bush garnered in the LGBT community.

"President Bush has had an awful record" on LGBT issues, said Sammon, "and McCain is a different kind of Republican. I think we have the opportunity to gain even more significant support in the LGBT community."

## **Staff appointments**

In its June 16 press release, the Obama campaign also announced 14 other campaign staff appointees – two of whom are openly gay men. As announced previously to the gay press, the campaign has appointed Brian Bond, former LGBT outreach director for the Democratic National Committee, as its new constituency director. **And it appointed Dave Noble, public policy and government affairs director for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, as the campaign's new LGBT vote director.**

McCain's campaign has not identified any openly gay campaign staffers or identified any staffers to try and woo the LGBT vote. This difference is likely to influence LGBT voters because it suggests an Obama White House would be more open to LGBT people and their concerns than would a McCain White House.

But the choice of a running mate is likely to be the next key influence. On his weekly political blog, Mixner said this week that an unscientific poll of his readers identified Hillary Clinton as the overwhelming preference for Obama's running mate. She garnered 41 percent of the votes, which Mixner said number in the "hundreds." The closest candidate behind her was New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson with 14 percent, former General Wesley Clark with 13 percent, and Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius with 12 percent. After that, preferred candidates are in the single digits, including Nunn with 2 percent.