



Students' Choice: Obama

Campus speech swayed voters, according to an informal survey

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Throughout the race for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination, Sen. Hillary Clinton has lauded Sen. Barack Obama's ability to give a speech and criticized his lack of experience.

But on the campus of Penn State University, where both candidates visited, Obama's speech appears to have influenced more Pennsylvania primary student voters than Clinton's experience.

Out of the 25 students who were polled while leaving Penn State University's student voting area in the HUB-Robeson Center, only two said they had voted for Clinton.

"I felt I related to Obama much more than Hillary," said Arvind Balaji, a Penn State sophomore and public relations student from Lansdale. "I saw both of them speak here and I just got so much more out of Obama's speech."

Obama and Clinton each spoke at Penn State University before the Pennsylvania primary but the crowds that gathered to hear the candidates varied greatly in attendance.

On April 20, Hillary Clinton spoke at Penn State's REC Hall before a crowd of only 1,500 people, a far cry from the 22,000 spectators who gathered at Penn State's Old Main Lawn to hear Obama's speech on March 30.

"I voted for Obama because I went to hear him speak and it sounded like he wanted to do a lot for students and minorities which are both important to me," said Ashley Mannings a sophomore journalism student at Penn State from Harrisburg.

Olayemi Falodun, a Penn State senior journalism student from Lansdowne, said he chose to vote for Obama after hearing him speak on campus and feeling moved by his words.

"Obama is the strongest candidate because he has the ability to excite the American people and anybody who can excite the American people to do positive things will better a whole community," said Falodun.

The few students polled who chose to vote for Clinton over Obama, had very different reasons as to why Clinton was the better candidate.

“Clinton’s issues spelled out better and her plans are more detailed,” said Leah Liu a junior biochemistry and molecular biology major at Penn State. Liu, who hails from Maryland, changed her voter registration specifically to participate in the Pennsylvania presidential primary.

Danielle Micale, a junior Penn State civil engineering student from Kersey, said she hadn’t followed the candidates very closely but voted for Clinton after turning to her family for advice.

“I asked my mom and my sister who they were voting for and they said Hillary so I thought I should too,” said Micale.

With so much attention focused on the Pennsylvania primary, some Republican student voters chose to change their party affiliation just to participate in the action.

“I’m really a Republican but I switched to Democrat just for this primary so I could vote for Obama,” said Sarah Plyler a Penn State freshman architecture student from New Castle.

While some voters, like Plyler, may be willing to change their political party because they prefer a candidate, others like Jim Reed, switched from Republican to Democrat specifically to oppose Clinton.

“I like [John] McCain,” said Reed, a Penn State sophomore from Beaver Falls majoring in nuclear engineering. “But I voted for Obama just because I really don’t like Hillary.”

