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## **Western Presidential Primary Update**

How much money have candidates raised in Utah?

*by Jennifer Robinson, CPPA Research Associate*

Three major Republican presidential candidates have visited Utah in the last few months, raising a great deal of money. Mitt Romney visited the state in February, attending fundraisers in Salt Lake and St. George, and raised more than \$1 million in the short visit (Roche 2007b). Romney spokesman Eric Fehrstrom said more than \$2 million has already been contributed by Utahns since the start of the year (Roche 2007a).

Senator John McCain's overnight visit came just over a week after Romney's two-day trip. McCain arrived in Utah Thursday morning and spent time with Gov. Huntsman before attending a fund-raiser at a private Federal Heights home where he raised more than \$150,000. (Roche 2007b).

Former New York City Mayor, Rudy Guiliani, visited Utah for a half-day fundraising trip on March 30, 2007. Giuliani, who arrived in Utah midday on a Friday afternoon, left shortly after collecting \$250,000 at an early evening fund-raiser at the Federal Heights home of former Salt Lake County Council member Steve Harmsen (Roche 2007c).

While Republican presidential candidates have actively fundraised in Utah, no Democratic candidate has visited the state this year. Based on Utah's strong support for Republican candidates, that does not seem unusual. However, because of Nevada's early caucus date, Democrats have been active in that state. Already, there have been two Democratic presidential debates in Nevada (a state largely ignored in the past, but now at the front and center of Democratic campaigns), and another one is planned for August. The debates have centered on Iraq and health care, and not on Western topics. The first forum, held in Carson City, attracted all Democratic candidates except Barack Obama, and none of the candidates said a word about Western issues (Kemmis and Brown 2007). The second debate, in Las Vegas, included all 7 Democratic candidates.

### **Candidates and Western Issues:**

The Western Primary is intended to accomplish several things, among them is giving voters in the West a real voice in selecting the candidate for each major political party. But beyond that, advocates of the Western Primary are hoping that candidates begin paying attention to issues of importance to Westerners. Over the next nine months, candidates will continue to make fundraising trips and attend debates in Western states, and maybe begin to understand Western issues.

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