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HEADLINES & TRANSCRIPT

TOPIC: CAMPAIGN 2008

GUESTS: DAVID AXELROD
Chief Strategist, Obama Campaign

- **Premature to discuss public financing for general election before nomination is decided**

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HOWARD WOLFSON
Communications Director, Clinton Campaign

- **"Our supporters, our superdelegates are staying with us. We're not worried about that."**

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MAYOR L. DOUGLAS WILDER
(D) Richmond

Former Gov. of Virginia Obama Surrogate

- **Bill Clinton hurt Hillary's chances by injecting race into campaign**

"...it's a mistake for Bill Clinton to believe that there has been given to him this mantle of authority to be able to speak for and to and to be dismissive of African-Americans. And I think he made a big mistake, and I think he hurt Hillary in the process."

- **It would be a mistake for superdelegates to ignore the will of the voters**

"Bob, I think it would be a mistake because you pointed out the first convention you went to was 1968. You know what a mess that was. If the majority of the American people who are participating in these processes, either through caucuses or through primaries, have a majority of those votes going for either of the candidates, and if the super delegates intervene and get in the way of it and say, oh, no, we're going to determine what's best, there will be chaos at the convention. It does nothing to help the Democrats. And if you think 1968 was bad, you watch; in 2008, it will be worse."

MAYOR ANTONIO VILLARAIGOSA (D) Los Angeles Clinton Surrogate

- **Hillary Clinton "understands that we need to unite America"**

"And I think that Hillary Clinton does that as well. I think she understands that we need to unite America, not just Democrats, Republicans and independents, black and white; every sector of the country."

TRANSCRIPT

SCHIEFFER: Good morning again. Joining us now from Chicago, David Axelrod; with us here in our studio, Howard Wolfson.

The big news, gentlemen, last week -- and I'm going to start with you, Howard -- was the significant number of African-American officials, members of Congress, party officials, a lot of these people who are super delegates, who have been for Hillary Clinton are now struggling with that choice. Some of them are saying they may switch and vote for Barack Obama at the convention.

Is this a serious problem for you?

WOLFSON: Well, look, this is a difficult decision for many in our party. We have two very strong candidates with real appeal. We think that our support is very strong. Our supporters, our super delegates are staying with us. We're not worried about that.

Let's put this, a little bit, in perspective. There are about 40 delegates separating Senator Obama from Senator Clinton, about 1 percent of the overall number. That's essentially a tie.

None of the candidates -- neither of the candidates will get to the number needed to secure the nomination, 2,025, without the support of super delegates.

There are a lot of states left to come. The Obama campaign manager, this past week, essentially declared the campaign in support of his guy. We think that that's giving short shrift to the millions of voters in Texas and Ohio and Wisconsin and Pennsylvania and so many other states.

We feel that we're going to do everything we can to win in Wisconsin on Tuesday. And then we go on to Ohio and we go on to Texas, where we feel very good. So this race is far from over.

SCHIEFFER: What's your response to that, David Axelrod?

AXELROD: Well, look, we've never -- despite Howard's characterization, we've never declared the race over. We believe senator Clinton is a very formidable candidate. She's got 20 years of political relationships and a very shrewd bunch of operatives like Howard. We'd never count her out in this race.

And we're going to fight for every delegate and every vote. But let's understand where we are. We're two-thirds through the process. And among elected delegates -- delegates elected by voters -- Senator Obama has a 138-delegate lead, going into the final end.

We've won nearly twice as many states as senator Clinton. We've won 14 of them by 20,000 votes or more. And we've done it by bringing not just Democrats but independents and disaffected Republicans to the polls, building the kind of coalition we need to win in November.

This is what the super delegates should be looking for. "Super delegates" doesn't mean that they should leap over the will of the people in a single bound. It means they should pay attention to what's going on and make a judgment as to who would be the strongest candidate, based on the results of the primaries.

Now, we're going to fight these out. Tuesday's going to be a tough race in Wisconsin. We've got another couple of tough ones two Tuesdays after that. And Howard is quite right. It's not over. But the truth is that the math is the math. And right now, Senator Obama has a strong lead. And we'd hate to see that lead -- I agree with Speaker Pelosi. That should not be overturned.

If, at the end of the day, we have that lead, that verdict should not be overturned by party insiders. And I don't think that will happen.

WOLFSON: You know, I agree with Chairman Dean, who said that the super delegates are supposed to vote their conscience. They're supposed to vote who they think will be the best person for the nation and for the party. That's why they were created. And that's what they're going to do.

And I think that the reason so many of them are supporting us -- and some certainly support Senator Obama. Senator Obama's campaign is vigorously attempting to secure their support. But the reason so many support us is because they know that Senator Clinton is the candidate with the real solutions that we need to tackle our tough problems.

SCHIEFFER: Well, let me go back to this -- what we started with, with some of these African-American super delegates who are having problems, now, thinking about whether they ought to switch and vote for Obama.

SCHIEFFER: Rep. Jim Clyburn of South Carolina said that one of the reasons they're doing that is because of the way Bill Clinton acted in South Carolina. That they feel that he injected race into the campaign there.

WOLFSON: With a lot of respect for Congressman Clyburn, I think Congressman Clyburn actually agrees with us on the role of superdelegates in this process. I don't accept the characterization about Bill Clinton's role in that regard.

And I think any close reading of the record would show that it's not the case.

SCHIEFFER: It does seem that he has dialed back, though, since then.

WOLFSON: Look, Bill Clinton is a great supporter, obviously, of Senator Clinton's. Wherever he goes, he gets loud and large crowds, and he makes a very strong and effective case for her.

SCHIEFFER: David Axelrod, Senator Clinton wants more debates. Why not more debates?

AXELROD: Well, we have one coming up next Thursday in Texas, Bob, and one five days later in Ohio. We've debated 18 times already. This would make 19 and 20. It is by far the largest number of debates ever in any primary campaign.

Debates are important, and we want to participate in them. But it's also important to go out, meet people, have interchanges with voters, have town hall meetings, and do the other things that one must do in campaigns. So, we can't just turn ourselves into a roving television program, and we're not going to let that dictate our campaign schedule.

SCHIEFFER: With all respect, aren't you just doing what people do when they think they're the front-runner? If you're ahead, you don't debate. If you're not ahead, you say, let's debate. Isn't that really what you're doing here?

AXELROD: I don't know, Bob, two national debates in five days, does that sound like we're not debating?

WOLFSON: Well, the...

AXELROD: I understand it's not on CBS, so you may have a bias on this, but...

WOLFSON: The Obama strategy here is essentially to debate in states where they're behind, but not debate in states where they're ahead.

AXELROD: That's nonsense.

WOLFSON: Well, you're debating in Ohio and Texas, where you're behind, but you don't want to debate in Wisconsin, where you're ahead. That's...

AXELROD: Well, first of all, I don't know whether we're ahead or behind in Wisconsin, but I appreciate the...

WOLFSON: Well, polls say that you're ahead. Polls say that you're ahead.

AXELROD: It's a very close race in Wisconsin, but...

WOLFSON: Polls say that you're ahead.

AXELROD: ... the point is, Howard, these debates are national debates. Eight million people watched the debate from California, and I guarantee you they weren't all Californians. Most of them were in other parts of the country. So, that's an, you know, an empty argument as far as I'm concerned.

We're going to have two national debates. I think they're going to be well-watched all across this country because people understand the importance of this campaign.

WOLFSON: And as newspapers across Wisconsin said, you should have done one in Wisconsin (inaudible).

SCHIEFFER: All right. Let me -- may I...

AXELROD: They endorse our candidacy, so I appreciate the newspapers' endorsements (ph).

SCHIEFFER: May I just inject one more question? Senator McCain, who's already going to be, it looks like, the nominee on the Republican side, says that he has pledged that when you get to the general election, that he's going to accept public financing, which basically means he's going to accept limits on campaign spending.

He says that Senator Obama pledged to do the same thing. Now Senator Obama seems to be backing away from that, David Axelrod. Why?

AXELROD: Bob, we're not backing away. What Senator Obama said is, once the nomination is secured, we will sit down with Senator McCain as the nominee, and we will talk this through.

I point out that just yesterday in the Washington Post, there was a story about the fact that Senator McCain publicly said he wasn't going to be in the finance -- public finance system of the primary, and privately was assuring banks that if things didn't go well, he would grab public financing to pay back his loan. So, I don't think anybody should moralize too much about this.

Let's get through the primary season, sit down. We obviously want -- nobody's been stronger on campaign finance reform than Barack Obama. And one of the great things about this campaign is that he's raised most of his money from small contributions, \$5, \$10, \$50, \$100.

SCHIEFFER: All right.

AXELROD: That's the way we want to proceed.

WOLFSON: You know, David's at odds with the facts here. Senator Obama explicitly said that he would engage in the public financing system if the Republican nominee did. He said that flat out.

He got the support of editorial board endorsements in part because of that. He got praise because of that. He allowed that to happen. And now...

AXELROD: We'll have that discussion, Howard. We'll have that discussion.

WOLFSON: No, you -- it wasn't about discussion, David. You said...

AXELROD: Are you going -- now, Senator Clinton has refused to do that. So, let's make that clear, but secondly...

WOLFSON: We didn't make a pledge to the voters that we're going back on, David. We didn't make a pledge to voters that we're going back on.

AXELROD: Are you going -- are you ceding us the nomination?

WOLFSON: No, no.

AXELROD: What we said is we will sit down after the process...

WOLFSON: No, that's not what you said.

AXELROD: ... and talk to Senator McCain.

WOLFSON: You told voters that you were going to do it.

AXELROD: Are you ceding us the nomination now?

WOLFSON: Of course we're not ceding you the nomination. But we're also not backing out on pledges that we made.

AXELROD: Well, well, (inaudible) we'll sit down.

SCHIEFFER: All right.

AXELROD: What about on Florida and Michigan?

SCHIEFFER: I think we're going to have to continue this, gentlemen.

WOLFSON: Indeed.

SCHIEFFER: Thank you very much for being with us.

AXELROD: Thanks, Bob.

SCHIEFFER: We'll be back in just one minute.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

SCHIEFFER: And with us now from Los Angeles, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. Joining us from Richmond, Mayor Doug Wilder, who of course was the first African-American in the South elected governor of Virginia some years back. Now, he sits in the mayor's chair.

Mr. Mayors, welcome to both of you.

Mayor Wilder, I want to start with you. We talked about this just briefly in the previous segment, about Bill Clinton's remarks in South Carolina, when he compared Barack Obama to Jesse Jackson. What I would like to ask you, Mr. Mayor, is why do African-Americans seem to take that -- they don't seem to like it. What did he do? What did they find offensive in that statement?

WILDER: Well, I certainly don't plan to speak for all African-Americans, but I can tell you what I found offensive. It is that he didn't look to the issues; he didn't look to the positions; he looked to the color. And to the extent that he did that and said, oh, he's a good spokesperson, he, you know, Jesse Jackson carried South Carolina twice. So it's no big deal.

And I think the mistake has been, unfortunately, that there are too many people who act as if the African-American voter is different, that they don't think, that they don't articulate their own views, that some people can speak for them.

My good friend Jim Clyburn says, well, you know, I think they are going to do this. He doesn't know what they are going to do. Nor does anyone else.

More importantly, it's a mistake for Bill Clinton to believe that there has been given to him this mantle of authority to be able to speak for and to and to be dismissive of African-Americans. And I think he made a big mistake, and I think he hurt Hillary in the process.

SCHIEFFER: Do you think so, Mayor? Mayor Villaraigosa?

VILLARAIGOSA: I think President Clinton has a long track record in support of civil rights, a strong relationship with the African-American community going way back to his time in Arkansas.

Whatever happened in South Carolina is behind us. And we're looking to the future.

SCHIEFFER: Mayor, Mayor Villaraigosa, let me just ask you a question here with the bark off, since that's sort of how we're talking here this morning. We keep hearing about the brown-black divide. Do Hispanics just not want to vote for an African-American?

VILLARAIGOSA: You know, Hispanics, Latinos voted for Tom Bradley four out of five elections in overwhelming numbers for mayor. They voted twice for him in overwhelming

numbers when he ran for governor. In Chicago, they voted in giant numbers, big numbers for Mayor Washington. In New York, for Mayor Dinkins. They voted for Ron Kirk, in big numbers.

There have been many, many occasions when Latinos have voted as part of a coalition with African-Americans.

Me and Henry Cisneros were both supported in large numbers by African-Americans in coalition -- historic elections with coalitions. So I just don't think that bears out by history or by the facts.

SCHIEFFER: Well, let me ask you, Mayor Wilder, because the one place where Mr. Obama has done well with Hispanic voters was in Virginia. He did well across the board...

WILDER: Yes.

SCHIEFFER: ... in Virginia.

WILDER: He did that.

SCHIEFFER: What do you say to him as to how to go about getting Hispanic voters? You were pretty good at that yourself.

WILDER: I did the best I could. But I think his message is already one of inclusion, of bringing people together, of uniting Americans. Of not appealing especially to any particular group. Not having a message for Hispanic voters or for East Europeans or Asians or for African-Americans. The same message of bringing people together, uniting to the cause, dealing with the kinds of things that need to be dealt with, bearing in mind that they have not been dealt with by these people who claim to have all of this experience, that they have all of these years of having been there. Yet what have they done?

WILDER: And I'll say it categorically, that the mayor of Los Angeles is absolutely right. He wouldn't be mayor of Los Angeles today just based on one set of votes, nor would I have been governor of Virginia.

That's why we need to speak to a plurality, to speak to the bringing of people together and not feed or allow to be fed into this notion of one group being against the

other. That's always been the case in America: divide the lower-income whites against the African- Americans; divide the ethnic Europeans against some other groups.

That day has come to an end. United we stand. Divided we fall. To the extent that Barack Obama is calling for that: get away from these divisions. Collect and bring together all of America's people.

SCHIEFFER: Well, just....

VILLARAIGOSA: I agree with Mayor Wilder -- in fact, just virtually everything he said. And I think that Hillary Clinton does that as well. I think she understands that we need to unite America, not just Democrats, Republicans and independents, black and white; every sector of the country.

This is one nation. And our ability to reach out to this nation, to speak to our issues -- the issues of the economy, the war, health care, the environment, is what this campaign is all about. And I think Hillary Clinton is doing that.

SCHIEFFER: Do you think, Mr. Mayor, that this is going all the way to the conventions?

And, in fact is that a good thing if it does?

VILLARAIGOSA: Well, we were all joking about traversing the nation. I'll be in Texas tonight. I can tell you I'd like it to be over, but this is a campaign. And it's a tough campaign. These are two great candidates.

This is the best field of candidates that I can remember since 1968 when Bobby Kennedy, Hubert Humphrey and Gene McCarthy were running. This is a battle of the titans. And we're probably going to go all the way to the convention.

SCHIEFFER: What do you, Mayor Wilder?

WILDER: Bob, I think it would be a mistake because you pointed out the first convention you went to was 1968. You know what a mess that was.

If the majority of the American people who are participating in these processes, either through caucuses or through primaries, have a majority of those votes going for either of

the candidates, and if the super delegates intervene and get in the way of it and say, oh, no, we're going to determine what's best, there will be chaos at the convention.

It does nothing to help the Democrats. And if you think 1968 was bad, you watch; in 2008, it will be worse. Moreover...

(CROSSTALK)

SCHIEFFER: Go ahead, Mayor.

WILDER: I was just going to say, on this issue of experience, I was governor when Hillary Clinton was given the mandate of authority to deal with health care. She had eight years to deal with it.

And I know. We went there. We couldn't get any information. It was very secreted. We couldn't get people to tell us what we needed to tell our constituents, what we could tell the business communities. She had eight years to deal with health care.

And I bring this question up quite often. Now, what has been poured into the water that you've learned, and what did you do?

I'm not speaking about the osmosis of being in the room when your husband was president or governor. What did you do relative to health care and these other issues that distinguishes you so much, so that you can say you have 35 years of it?

SCHIEFFER: All right...

WILDER: That's not the case at all. Obama is bringing people together.

SCHIEFFER: All right. I will give you 30 seconds.

VILLARAIGOSA: Well, I can tell you that she led the effort for universal coverage in America, and she started a conversation around the idea that health care is a right and not a privilege. We have the SCHIP program. More than six million kids...

WILDER: I agree with you the conversation has been started, yes.

VILLARAIGOSA: More than six million kids have health care today. In fact, 800,000 in the state of California have health care because of her efforts.

Look, these are two great candidates. They're engaging in a debate, in a conversation about a new direction for America, a new change of course. And I'm supporting Hillary Clinton because I think she's the right candidate. Mayor Wilder is supporting Senator Obama for the same reasons.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Gentlemen, we have to stop it there...

(CROSSTALK)

SCHIEFFER: ... as much as fun as it's been.

(LAUGHTER)

WILDER: Thank you, Bob.

Thank you, Tony.

VILLARAIGOSA: Thank you, Doug.

SCHIEFFER: Back with Roger Simon of Politico in just a moment.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

SCHIEFFER: And with us now for our campaign quick check, Roger Simon, the chief political columnist for Politico. And Roger, I apologize. It's going to have to be quick because I let the two bears run over a little because that was a good little debate.

SIMON: They were good.

SCHIEFFER: Your impression.

SIMON: My impression is that Doug Wilder came close to predicting riots in the streets, literally, if Barack Obama is not -- enters the convention with the most elected delegates, but that decision is overturned by superdelegates. And I think that shows you how sensitive this is, that if anybody gets a majority of elected delegates, goes into Denver, and somehow the system is gamed by superdelegates or the seating of Michigan or the

seating of Florida, and that victory is snatched away from them, it will rip the Democratic Party in two.

SCHIEFFER: Well, you and I were talking before about that you said you thought there was going to be a really raucous time if it did get to the conventions. And boy, he underlined it.

SIMON: Absolutely. Because look at what it says. I mean, you know, it's always uncomfortable to bring it up in racial terms, but look at the message that the Democratic Party would be sending to its most loyal voters, African-American voters.

It's saying, well, you know, you thought you were going to have the first black nominee and maybe the first black president of the United States, but we found a little escape clause here. They're called superdelegates. They're called the seating of two delegations who we decided last year we weren't going to seat.

We're going to take that away from you. What kind of message does that send to many people within the Democratic Party? Can you emerge from that and still have a unified party? I don't think so.

SCHIEFFER: Well, of course, that may not happen. We should point that out. We've still got Texas and Ohio. Hillary Clinton really has to do well, though, there, doesn't she?

SIMON: She really has to do well. She has to do well everywhere. It would be good for her to surprise someplace. It would be good for her to win in Wisconsin.

What she has to do is simply get to the convention with the most elected delegates. Then, all these problems go away. Because I think basic fairness states, if you got your delegates by primaries or caucuses, you should be the nominee of the party.

SCHIEFFER: He had some tough things to say about Bill Clinton.

SIMON: He did, and this shows you the depths of feelings that are being stirred up in this race. He basically said, Gov. Wilder, who is Bill Clinton to assume that he has this mantle of authority from black people?

You can't imagine that being said a year ago or even six months ago. But this is what happened -- has happened to Bill Clinton's legacy now.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Roger Simon. We'll be back with a final word in just a minute.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

SCHIEFFER: Finally today, we always watch the telecast of the Westminster dog show at our house, and when Uno the beagle took best in show, I cheered out loud. My wife cried real tears of joy.

Beagles are the best dogs that ever were. I feel the same way about dogs that I do about food. I like my food to look like food. The meat in its place on the plate, the vegetables in theirs -- not all stacked up like some cutesy piece of art. And please, flowers belong in vases, not on my plate.

As for dogs, I like them to look like dogs, not some perfumed ball of fur that resembles a powder puff.

You wouldn't paint a beagle's toenails or put ribbons in a beagle's hair.

We had three beagles at our house. Ralph, whose keen nose found the book satchel stuffed with beer that the boys hid in our garden the night of the first boy-girl party at our house. Old Ralph held his point until I removed it.

Then there was little Dixie, who gave a light bite to the diplomat from the Chinese embassy who strolled past our house one morning. It was just after Tiananmen Square; clearly, a brave act of political protest.

And there was sweet Betty. Such a shy little city dog. She didn't even like to go outside without a leash.

It took 100 years, but America is a better place when beagles rule. Good dog, Uno.

That's it for us. We'll see you next week right here on "Face the Nation."