

IT'S OBAMA

U.S. ELECTS ITS FIRST BLACK PRESIDENT



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'Change has come,' President-elect Barack Obama told supporters at a celebration in Chicago. He asked Americans to 'summon a new spirit of patriotism, of service and responsibility.'

Voters embrace Democrat's message of change

By Scott Shepard
WASHINGTON BUREAU

CHICAGO — An unhappy and unsettled America picked an unlikely president Tuesday: Sen. Barack Obama, a 47-year-old African American lawmaker from Illinois who sparked a sweeping political movement with an eloquent promise of change and, most importantly, hope.

"Yes, we can," Obama said repeatedly during a quest for the presidency that lasted almost two years, through bruising Democratic Party primaries, a costly war on two fronts in the Middle

East, economic woes that have been compared the Great Depression of the 1930s and questions about his patriotism.

In the end, despite lingering questions about his scant experience, especially on the world stage, Obama defeated veteran Republican Sen. John McCain in an election heralding what could be a redefining moment in the history of America.

Television networks declared Obama the winner about 9 p.m. Central Standard Time as polls closed on the West Coast, where Obama was heavily favored after he piled up electoral votes toward the 270-vote threshold to become the first

black president in the country's history.

Analysts said Obama's success was aided in part by the public's displeasure with President Bush, whose pre-election approval rating bottomed out at 25 percent, the lowest the Gallup Polling Organization ever recorded for a modern president.

Obama carried some of the states that were key to Bush's re-election four years ago, most notably Ohio, Florida, New Mexico and Iowa. And he and McCain were locked in a close battle for the Republican stronghold of Indiana.

"At this point we need a miracle," a McCain aide was quoted as saying on the CBS News Web

site after Ohio fell. No Republican has won the presidency without carrying Ohio.

A victory for McCain would have been historic as well. The 72-year-old senator would have been the oldest president to begin a first term in the White House and the first Vietnam War veteran to serve in the Oval Office. His running mate, Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, would have been the first female U.S. vice president.

Obama also won Pennsylvania, a Democratic-leaning state McCain had targeted with time and money. Without Pennsylvania, it would

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CONGRESSIONAL RACES

Democrats gain ground in both Senate and House

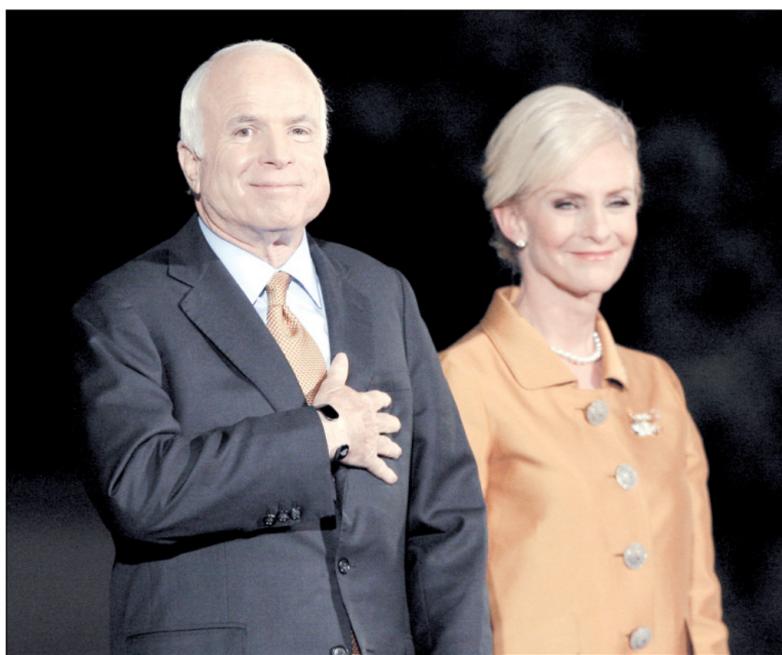
By Carl Hulse
THE NEW YORK TIMES

Democrats scored some quick and convincing victories Tuesday in both houses of Congress, picking up Senate seats in North Carolina, New Hampshire and Virginia in what party officials hoped were the first steps toward increasing its strength on Capitol Hill to pursue an ambitious policy agenda.

All 435 House seats and 35 Senate seats were at stake, but incumbents were expected to breeze to re-election in most of those races, putting the focus on about a dozen Senate seats and 50 House seats where the competition was fierce.

In North Carolina, Sen. Elizabeth Dole, one of the most famous names in Republican politics, was defeated by Kay Hagan, a state lawmaker whose portrayal of Dole as a Washington insider suggested that she was out of touch with the people of her state.

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Republican Sen. John McCain, with wife Cindy McCain, thanked supporters of his presidential campaign and congratulated Barack Obama for his victory at a Phoenix, Ariz., rally on Tuesday night.

ANALYSIS

Winning was hard, but tough tasks of leading lie ahead

By Liz Sidoti
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Now comes the hard part.

Democratic Sen. Barack Obama beat the Democratic establishment, conquered doubts about his experience and overcame questions about his race to be elected the first black president of the United States.

As president-elect, he faces three immediate challenges: confronting the worst economic conditions since the Great Depression, determining the next steps in two lingering wars and leading his Democrats, including some who want the change he has promised to come instantly. It won't.

On the heels of a campaign in which cash wasn't a concern, Obama must tackle all those tasks with little room in the budget as the nation appears to be heading for a painful recession.

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