

08/26/2023 10:00:00 [BN] Bloomberg News

Harris Taps Wall Street, Hollywood Ties to Deliver Biden Donors

- Charles Myers, Phil Munger among Harris's Wall Street backers
- Anna Wintour, Rosario Dawson bring star power to events

By Akayla Gardner

(Bloomberg) -- Vice President Kamala Harris draws unfavorable marks from more than half of Americans, but that hasn't stopped her from becoming a prolific fundraiser for President Joe Biden's reelection campaign.

The reelection team is drawing on the former California senator and attorney general's ties to Hollywood and Silicon Valley to court big-ticket contributors from those spheres as well as from Wall Street.

Harris, the nation's first Black, Asian and woman vice president, has headlined more receptions than anyone on the team this cycle, even Biden. Harris has been a critical asset to an operation that raised \$72 million in the second-quarter, exceeding their challengers, including Republican primary frontrunner Donald Trump, over that period.

Businessmen Charles Myers and Phil Munger, and Milwaukee Bucks executive Alex Lasry, as well as longtime Vogue editor Anna Wintour have all joined with Harris to raise campaign funds.



Kamala Harris waves at the crowd at an abortion rights rally at Howard University.

Hosts are often forced to turn away interested supporters, according to donors who requested anonymity to speak about the events. At least one donor specifically requested that Harris speak at the reception they hosted.

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"People want to see her, they want to meet her, they want to hear what she has to say," said Desiree Rogers, a former White House social secretary who co-hosted a Chicago fundraiser in July. "Had we had more space, we could have sold more tickets."

Harris's fundraising prowess has illustrated her value to the ticket, despite her tepid popularity among the general public. An Economist/YouGov poll conducted in August found 52% view her unfavorably and 39% favorably, closely tracking Biden's approval rating. In the same survey, 55% said they viewed Biden unfavorably and 42% viewed him favorably.

Republicans have sought to exploit Harris's approval ratings, with attacks questioning her ability to assume the presidency if Biden, the oldest US president at 80, cannot continue.

Read more: Trump Raked In \$72.6 Million, Leaving Rivals in the Dust

"Any person on that stage is better than Kamala Harris," former South Carolina Governor and presidential aspirant Nikki Haley said about her Republican rivals in an interview with Bloomberg Television on Thursday, the day after the party's first primary debate.

Haley signed a pledge that the Republican National Committee required of debate participants by crossing out a logo reading "Beat Biden" and writing "Beat President Harris" instead.

Big-Ticket Donors

Still, Harris's popularity with the Democratic base has drawn star power to the trail.

"We need her everywhere," Wintour said at a New York City reception in May packed with celebrities, including Emmy award-winner Sheryl Lee Ralph, actor Corey Hawkins, and TV personality Padma Lakshmi.

Actress Rosario Dawson introduced the vice president at the Democratic National Committee's annual LGBTQ leadership council gala in June, which raised \$1.3 million – the largest haul since the event started more than two decades ago, according to a source familiar with the matter.

A July New York City fundraiser at the residence of Myers, the chairman and founder of Signum Global Advisors LLC, raised about \$650,000 for the campaign, exceeding a half-million dollar target. The event was co-hosted by Munger, the son of Warren Buffett's longtime business partner, Charles Munger.

Two events this month in Wisconsin, including one at Lasry's home, brought nearly \$400,000 for the Biden Victory Fund, a person familiar with the matter said. Other fundraisers took Harris to Martha's Vineyard, Mass., and Seattle.

Alex Heckler, DNC deputy national finance chair and a lawyer, recalled Harris taking photos with each of the roughly 60 attendees at his Miami Beach home in March. "She stayed there until she got to say hello to every single person," Heckler said. "She's a big draw."



Kamala Harris

The DNC has taken advantage of Harris's smaller official travel footprint and lighter day-to-day schedule compared to Biden to ramp up her fundraising.

After Biden picked her for his 2020 running mate, the team raised \$26 million in one day, a record for the party, according to a campaign memo.

The vice president has also focused on speaking to issues – including abortion, climate change and gun control – that Democrats see as mobilizing women, young progressives and people of color, an effort that has helped drive her popularity with donors, according to a person familiar with the campaign who requested anonymity.

Harris's popularity with donors would benefit any future presidential aspirations she might have.

"I will be very proud to be the first one to sign up for Harris for President 2028," said Myers at the fundraiser he hosted.

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