

Fundraising trip draws out mix of supporters, protesters

OAKLAND — President Barack Obama told about 2,000 adoring supporters he needs a second term to finish delivering on his promises of restoring the American dream for all.

DAN HONDA/ STAFF



Onlookers wait to try to catch a glimpse of President Barack Obama along Madison Street in Oakland.

“This country was not built from the top down, it was built from the middle class up,” he said at Oakland’s Fox Theater. “That’s how we became the most prosperous nation in the history of this world. That’s the path you can choose in this election. And that’s why I’m running for a second term as president.”

Supporters paid from \$ 100 to \$ 7,500 each to attend the event, which was the third of three fundraisers he did Monday in the East Bay. “Frankly, the other side knows they can’t sell their ideas, so what they’re going to try to do is distort my vision,” he said, calling Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney out by name for recent efforts to twist Obama’s words about small businesses.

“I believe the free market is the greatest source of prosperity in our history,” but any business owner will also tell you success requires workers with the right skills and education, and a strong middle class that can buy products and services, Obama said.

“Mr. Romney’s plan is to gut these investments just so he can give more tax breaks to millionaires and those who are shipping jobs overseas,” he said. “I’ve got to tell you, Oakland, he is dead wrong.

“There’s only one way to grow our economy for the long run. That’s what I’m fighting for,” Obama said. “I’m running because I believe you can’t reduce the deficit ... without asking folks like me who’ve been incredibly blessed to give up the tax breaks we’ve enjoyed for a decade.

“I’m running because after a decade of war, it’s time to do some nation- building here at home,” he said.

“I told you in 2008 that I wasn’t a perfect man and I wouldn’t be a perfect president ... but that I would wake up every single day fighting as hard as I can to make your lives a little bit better, because I saw myself in you,” he said. “And Oakland, I have kept that promise every day ... I have been thinking about you and fighting as hard as I know how.”

Obama earlier had addressed about 60 supporters who had paid \$ 35,800 each to attend dinner at the Piedmont home of attorney/ activist Quinn Delaney and real estate developer Wayne Jordan; Jordan is among the president's foremost fundraising "bundlers."

There, the president had said the GOP platform calls for tax cuts for the rich and stripping away regulations from Wall Street and corporate polluters. "It's a theory we've tested for a decade and it didn't work."

"This debate plays itself out across the board, on almost every issue," he said, noting that because California isn't a battleground state, many in the audience haven't seen the attack ads that are flying back and forth elsewhere in the country. "I'm comfortable that the American people will make the right choice.

"Americans are strong and they're resilient and they're optimistic about their futures and their kids' futures," he said, although they know of and are concerned about dysfunction in Washington, D. C., and a sluggish economy. "All they want to see is that their leadership shows the same decency and common sense that they try to apply every day in their own lives."

Among those in the dinner crowd were: Rep. Barbara Lee, D- Oakland; former state Controller and major Obama supporter Steve Westly; prominent Bay Area attorneys Bob Van Nest and Steve Kazan; Ask. com founder and Alta Partners co- founder Garrett Gruener; philanthropists and cleantech investors Jim and Gretchen Sandler; and real estate investment manager Dorine Streeter.

Obama's visit stirred both his most ardent supporters and fiercest foes. Hundreds of medical cannabis advocates, angry over a recent federal crackdown on dispensaries, marched through downtown Oakland, passing equally thick crowds of Obama fans waiting in line to get into the Fox.

Medical cannabis advocates are angry with the president for allowing federal prosecutors to shut down dispensaries across California after he had pledged during his first campaign not to target the industry in states where it is legal.

In April, agents raided the Oakland properties of former Oakland University Chief Richard Lee, who bankrolled a failed 2010 state proposition to legalize cannabis. Two weeks ago, prosecutors moved to shut down Oakland's Harborside Health Center, the nation's largest dispensary.

Obama supporters paid little attention to the protesters as they lined up on Broadway to get into the Fox. "It means a lot that the president has come to Oakland where I live and not up in the hills where the millionaires are," Mada Hudson said.

By early evening, most of the cannabis protesters had departed, and more than 100 demonstrators with Occupy Oakland and various anti- war groups had amassed one block from the theater at 19th and Broadway. Several of the protesters covered their faces, and many were standing in Broadway, blocking traffic. They marched to 20th and Telegraph Avenue and later dispersed after the crowd left the Fox Theater.

After traveling to Colorado on Sunday, Obama flew to spend the night at San Francisco's InterContinental Hotel. "This is the first time the president has come to the East Bay, and he told us that he would come, and he acted on his promise," Oakland Mayor Jean Quan said, greeting the president at the airport. "This is Obama country; we love him and support him."



The president's motorcade then brought him to the Scottish Rite temple near Lake Merritt for a round- table with about 25 tech leaders, for which tickets cost \$ 35,800 a person; reporters weren't allowed into this event. He went from there to the Piedmont dinner.