

# A TIMELINE OF REVERSAL

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ARLINGTON, VA -- Throughout this campaign, Barack Obama has campaigned on his pledge to take public financing in the general election. However, today, Barack Obama has shown himself to be a typical politician. Please find below a timeline of Barack Obama's support for public financing and subsequent reversal:

**JUNE 2006: Barack Obama Says "I Strongly Support Public Financing."** OBAMA: "Well, I strongly support public financing. And I know [Senator] Dick [Durbin] does too. He's going to have some things to say about it because when we were having - as you'll recall - the major debates around lobbying reform, one of the things that Dick, I think, properly pointed out was that you can change the rules on lobbying here in Washington, but if we're still getting financed primarily from individual contributions, that those with the most money are still going to have the most influence." (Sen. Barack Obama, Remarks At Constituents Breakfast, 6/29/06)

· Please Watch Barack Obama Here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IU5V3fO7B1U>

**JANUARY 2007: Barack Obama Says "I'm A Big Believer In Public Financing" And "The Presidential Public Financing System Works."** KING: "Senator Clinton, by the way, has decided to reject public financing for her campaign. Are you going to do the same?" OBAMA: "Well, you know, this is something that, obviously, we are going to have to take a careful look at. I'm a big believer in public financing of campaigns. And I think that for a time, the presidential public financing system works." (CNN's "Larry King Live," 1/24/07)

**FEBRUARY 2007: Barack Obama Petitions The FEC To Clear Way For Deal To Preserve Public Financing For the General Election, Pledging To Do So If He Is The Nominee.** "Senator Barack Obama of Illinois, a contender for the Democratic presidential nomination, issued an unusual challenge to his rivals on Wednesday. He proposed a voluntary agreement between the two major party nominees that would limit their fund-raising and spending for the general election. ... In a Feb. 1 filing with the Federal Election Commission that was made public on Wednesday, Mr. Obama said that he, too, would seek enough private donations to remain competitive, but with a twist. He asked the commission if he could begin soliciting private donations with the understanding that he might later return the money to his contributors. If he won the Democratic nomination, he could then strike a deal with the Republican nominee to return their private donations and use only public money for the general election. For 2008, that would limit each general election campaign to about \$85 million. 'Should both major party nominees elect to receive public funding, this would preserve the public financing system, now in danger of collapse, and facilitate the conduct of campaigns freed from any dependence on private fund-raising,' Mr. Obama's filing said." (David K. Kirkpatrick, "Obama Proposes Candidates Limit General Election Spending," *The New York Times*, 2/8/07)

· **McCain And Obama Agree To Preserve The Public Financing System.** "Senator John McCain joined Senator Barack Obama on Thursday in promising to accept a novel fund-raising truce if each man wins his party's presidential nomination. The promises by Mr. McCain, Republican of Arizona, and Mr. Obama, Democrat of Illinois, are an effort to resuscitate part of the ailing public financing system for presidential campaigns. ... On Thursday, a spokesman for Mr. McCain said that he would take up Mr. Obama on a proposal for an accord between the two major party nominees to rely just on public financing for the general election. ... The manager of Mr. McCain's campaign, Terry Nelson, said he welcomed the decision. 'Should John McCain win the Republican nomination, we will agree to accept public financing in the general election, if the

Democratic nominee agrees to do the same,' Mr. Nelson said." (David D. Kirkpatrick, "McCain And Obama In Deal On Public Financing," *The New York Times*, 3/2/07)

· ***The New York Times: "McCain And Obama In Deal On Public Financing."*** (David D. Kirkpatrick, "McCain And Obama In Deal On Public Financing," *The New York Times*, 3/2/07)

**FEBRUARY 2007: Barack Obama Co-Sponsors Legislation To Keep Current Public Funding System Relevant.** "Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) added his name to legislation overhauling the public financing of presidential elections this week, earning him plaudits from watchdog groups. ... Democracy 21 President Fred Wertheimer yesterday urged Obama's presidential rivals to follow his lead and cosponsor this session's bill from Sen. Russ Feingold (D-Wis.). It would raise significantly the spending cap for candidates accepting public funds during their White House campaigns in an effort to keep the system relevant." (Elana Schor, "Obama Co-Signs Bill To Publicly Fund Campaigns," *The Hill*, 2/16/07)

**MARCH 2007: Obama Spokesman Bill Burton Said Barack Obama "Will Aggressively Pursue An Agreement" On Public Financing.** BURTON: "If Senator Obama is the nominee, he will aggressively pursue an agreement with the Republican nominee to preserve a publicly financed general election." (Jim Kuhnhenn, "Federal Regulators Rule Candidates Can Return Donations For General Election," *The Associated Press*, 3/1/07)

**NOVEMBER 2007: In Response To A Midwest Democracy Network Questionnaire, Barack Obama Said He Would Accept Public Funding In The General Election.** Question: "If you are nominated for President in 2008 and your major opponents agree to forgo private funding in the general election campaign, will you participate in the presidential public financing system?" Obama: "Yes. I have been a long-time advocate for public financing of campaigns combined with free television and radio time as a way to reduce the influence of moneyed special interests." (Sen. Barack Obama, "Presidential Candidate Questionnaire," Midwest Democracy Network, [www.commoncause.org](http://www.commoncause.org), 11/27/07)

· **Barack Obama Even Referred To His Plan As A "Fundraising Pledge" For His Opponents To Accept.** Obama: "In February 2007, I proposed a novel way to preserve the strength of the public financing system in the 2008 election. My proposal followed announcements by some presidential candidates that they would forgo public financing so they could raise unlimited funds in the general election. The Federal Election Commission ruled the proposal legal, and Senator John McCain (R-AZ) has already pledged to accept this fundraising pledge." (Sen. Barack Obama, "Presidential Candidate Questionnaire," Midwest Democracy Network, [www.commoncause.org](http://www.commoncause.org), 11/27/07)

**FEBRUARY 2008: Barack Obama Writes An Op-Ed In USA Today Stating That He Would "Aggressively Pursue" An Agreement With The Republican Nominee Guaranteeing "A Publicly Funded General Election In 2008 With Real Spending Limits."** "In 2007, shortly after I became a candidate for president, I asked the Federal Election Commission to clear any regulatory obstacles to a publicly funded general election in 2008 with real spending limits. The commission did that. But this cannot happen without the agreement of the parties' eventual nominees. As I have said, I will aggressively pursue such an agreement if I am my party's nominee. I do not expect that a workable, effective agreement will be reached overnight. The campaign-finance laws are complex, and filled with loopholes that can render meaningless any agreement that is not solidly constructed. ... I propose a meaningful agreement in good faith that results in real spending limits. The candidates will have to commit to discouraging cheating by their supporters; to refusing fundraising help to outside groups; and to limiting their own parties to legal forms of involvement. And the agreement may have to address the amounts that Senator McCain, the presumptive nominee of his party, will spend for the general election while the Democratic primary contest continues. In 1996, an agreement on spending limits was reached by Sen. John Kerry and Gov. William Weld in their Massachusetts Senate contest. They agreed to limits on overall and personal spending and on a mechanism to account for outside spending. The agreement did not accomplish all these candidates hoped, but they believe that it made a substantial difference in controlling outside groups as well as their own spending. We can have

such an agreement this year, and it could hold up. I am committed to seeking such an agreement if that commitment is matched by Senator McCain. When the time comes, we will talk and our commitment will be tested. I will pass that test, and I hope that the Republican nominee passes his." (Barack Obama, Op-Ed, "Opposing View: Both Sides Must Agree," [USA Today](#), 2/20/08)

**FEBRUARY 2008: Barack Obama Says "I Will Sit Down With John McCain" To Address Public Financing.** NBC'S TIM RUSSERT: "So you may opt out of public financing. You may break your word." BARACK OBAMA: "What I -- what I have said is, at the point where I'm the nominee, at the point where it's appropriate, I will sit down with John McCain and make sure that we have a system that works for everybody." (Democratic Presidential Debate, Cleveland, OH, 2/26/08)

· **Please Watch Barack Obama Here:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELoKGvOwSI4>

**APRIL 2008: ABC News' Jake Tapper Reports That Barack Obama Is Previewing Arguments To Opt Out Of The Public Financing System.** "Despite his previous pledge to enter into the public financing system should he be the Democratic presidential nominee, Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., has recently been reluctant to re-commit to entering the system. This reluctance has coincided with his primary, caucus, and fundraising successes. For that reluctance, Obama has been hammered as hypocritical by Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., not to mention impartial observers. Tonight at a fundraiser in Washington, D.C., at the National Museum of Women in the Arts -- at a \$2,300-per-person event for 200 people held before a \$1,000-per-person reception for 350 people -- Obama previewed his argument to justify this possible future discarding of a principle." (Jake Tapper, "Obama Prepares Argument To Discard Public-Financing Principle," ABC News, 4/8/08)

· **The Washington Post Highlights The Test Confronting Barack Obama:** "When it was in Mr. Obama's interest to present himself as the ethical savior of an imperiled campaign finance system, he was happy to do so, especially since it didn't seem especially likely at the time that he'd be the nominee. But the real test of a candidate is whether he will stick by an announced principle even when that's against his own interest. Now Mr. Obama could become the first nominee since Watergate to run a campaign fueled entirely by private money." (Editorial, "A Lapsed Principle," *The Washington Post*, 4/14/08)

**APRIL 2008: Barack Obama Says "I Have Promised That I Will Sit Down With John McCain And Talk About Can We Preserve A Public System."** FOX NEWS' CHRIS WALLACE: "Wall Street Journal says that you are prepared to run the first privately financed campaign, presidential campaign, since Watergate. True?" OBAMA: Well, look. We've done a wonderful job raising money from the grassroots. I'm very proud of the fact that in March -- in February, for example, 90 percent of our donations came over the Internet. Our average donation is \$96, and we've done an amazing job, I think, mobilizing people to finance our campaigns in small increments. I have promised that I will sit down with John McCain and talk about can we preserve a public system, as long as we are taking into account third party independent expenditures. Because what I don't intend to do --" (Fox News' "Fox News Sunday," 4/27/08)

· **Barack Obama: "I Would Be Very Interested In Pursuing Public Financing..."** "MR. WALLACE: "If you can get that agreement, you would go for a publicly financed campaign?" OBAMA: "What I don't intend to do is to allow huge amounts of money to be spent by the RNC, the Republican National Committee, or by organizations like the Swift Boat organization, and just stand there without -- (cross talk)." WALLACE: "But if you get that agreement?" OBAMA: "I would be very interested in pursuing public financing, because I think not every candidate is going to be able to do what I've done in this campaign, and I think it's important to think about future campaigns." (Fox News' "Fox News Sunday," 4/27/08)

· **Please Watch Barack Obama Here:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GsonmKK5j6Y>

**JUNE 2008: Barack Obama Tells The *USA Today* That He Would Pursue A Public Financing Agreement With John McCain.** "On campaign finance. Obama said he'll accept public financing for his campaign -- which would limit the amount of spending -- only if McCain agrees to curb spending by the Republican National Committee. 'I won't disarm unilaterally,' he said." (Kathy Kiely, "Obama Reaching Out To The White Working Class," *USA Today*, 6/6/08)

**JUNE 2008: Barack Obama Has Declined Public Financing In The General Election, Calling It A "Broken System."** "In a web video emailed to supporters, Obama asks his supporters to help him 'declare our independence from a broken system.' Of course, it's not so much a broken system that explains why he's passing on the FEC's \$80+million. He will easily raise more than he could ever get in public funding." (Jonathan Martin, "Obama Opts Out Of Public Financing," *The Politico's* "Jonathan Martin" Blog, [www.politico.com](http://www.politico.com), 6/19/08)