

Santorum?



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BY JED. I. KNIGHT
CONTRIBUTING VERY LITTLE

President Barack Obama is set to come to Portland in September in hopes of matching or even exceeding his 75,000-plus attendance record achieved in his last campaign swing here in 2008.

The announcement comes as stiff competition mounts from Rick Santorum, who is seen as the GOP frontrunner for the nomination and a formidable opponent to Obama's policies on family values.

Santorum's surge in the polls over the past month has the Obama campaign rescheduling time on the liberal West Coast, which was once thought to be a shoe-in for the Democratic incumbent.

"Santorum has taken a stance on a lot of issues that Obama has, frankly, been relatively mum on," says Rod Stagger, a political analyst with Reed College.

"Santorum's been out front in his stance against men marrying hordes of other men, for example, and Obama has frankly not said a thing on the matter. It's going to make it harder for Obama to win back the people who voted for him in '08 as *the* true conservative."

Twenty-one-year-old Colin Marin of Portland is one man who supports Santorum in his bid to stop man-and-multiple-men marriages. Marin currently lives with four other men.

"I should have known it was a mistake to enter into this agreement," Marin said. "They're slobs and they're demanding. It's just too much. It sounded like a good idea at the time — even with two jobs, I was broke, and they seemed to really like me — but if Santorum had been elected in 2010, this would never have happened."

Nor has Obama outlined his strategy for

making sure the country isn't harmed by contraceptive use and the lack of an imposed morality standard, even as he pushed for a federal mandate that insurance companies cover contraceptives.

"Santorum has come out clearly on the one issue most Americans are worried about, that women are making decisions they have no control over," Stagger says. "Where's Obama on controlling women? Nowhere."

Obama's efforts to reduce the unemployment rate also raises concerns among analysts who say this could make him weak against a candidate who has dismissed such statistical jibberish. Santorum has made it clear that the unemployment rate doesn't matter.

"Doesn't matter to me," Santorum said at a recent stump speech in Illinois.

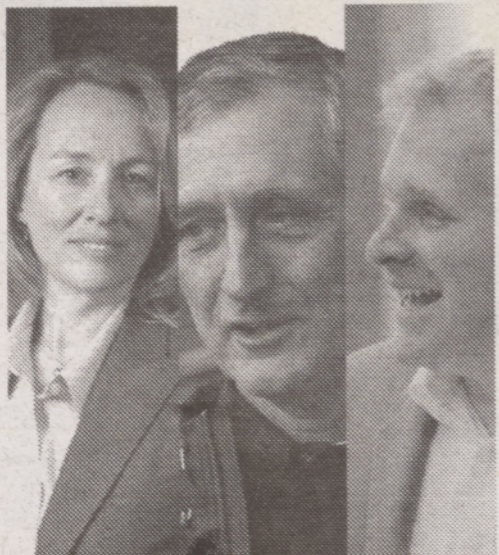
"This could be a big problem for Obama if

the jobless rate continues to dominate the news," says Armand Guterrez, a political analyst with the non-profit Oregonians With Intention. "If Obama continues to hammer on something that Santorum has made clear is not important to the next President of the United States, voters could get disillusioned as to what really matters in their lives."

At the crux, however, is Obama's embracement of "evil", an issue Santorum has raised throughout the campaign. A call to the White House on the issue of the President's love of evil was not returned.

"Obama's silence on evil and its minions makes this a close race," says Nathan Guillatino, a political analyst with the non-productive Vegans Against Evil. "Obama is at a distinct disadvantage if he doesn't go after evil in the campaign. He has a lot of catching up to do if he want's to go toe-to-toe with Santorum on this issue."

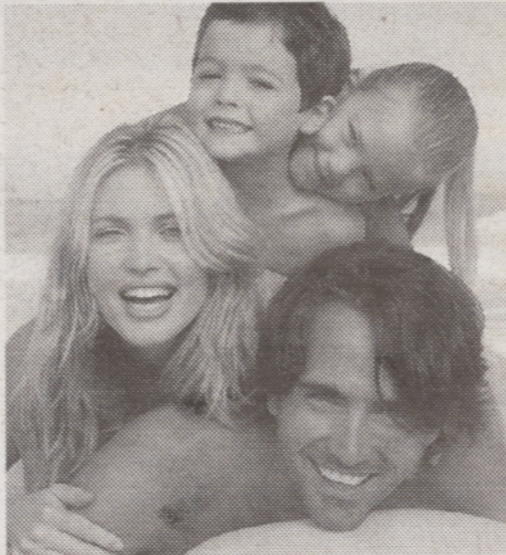
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