

# MICHI-GONE (BUT NOT FORGOTTEN)

There's still something funky about the way McCain pulled out of MI. As I noted yesterday, Obama was focused enough on MI to schedule a Detroit rally (Sunday, with both Obamas and both Bidens), two Michelle events (yesterday), and Grand Rapids and Lansing rallies yesterday. And, as Nate points out, MI wasn't even the best state to pull out of based on return on investment.

That is, Michigan actually appeared to be a slightly better place to spend their marginal resources than states like Pennsylvania or Wisconsin; a dollar there goes about 2.4 times as far as one spent in an average state.

Then there's how quickly they made the decision (I know, I know, this is McCain, but still). The MI GOP had emergency meetings last night to devise a new strategy (and, apparently, Kissinger did a McCain campaign stop today).

Michigan Republicans kicked into overdrive last night. We had a series of conference calls and meetings with activists and donors, coming up with our own plan on how to implement a "Michigan strategy" for McCain and the rest of our ticket.

Which is going to be particularly tough for them, given that they were nearly broke in May and were surely counting on ~~Cindy's~~ McCain's money to support campaign events this year.

And as some have noted, Sarah Palin just found out this morning.

"Well, that's not a surprise because, you know, the polls are showing we're not doing as well there evidently as we would like to," Palin said. "But I read

that this morning also. I fired off a quick email and said 'Oh, come on, you know, do we have to? Do we have to call it there?'"

And perhaps weirdest of all, there's the overall damage this decision will do to McCain's campaign (Jack Lessenberry is MI's favorite political curmudgeon).

For John McCain, pulling most of his campaign operations out of Michigan makes a certain kind of sense. On paper, anyway. But then, the Vietnam War made a certain amount of sense on paper.

Just not in reality. My guess is that the McCain camp's decision will turn out to have been an appalling blunder for reasons that stretch far beyond Michigan. First of all, let's look at what happened.

[snip]

My guess is that the stigma of having publicly conceded a major state a month before the election will far outweigh the advantage of having an extra staffer or two in Florida or being able to show a few ads in Maine or Ohio.

Closer to home, this will have a devastating effect on Republican morale. Democrats will now have a far greater chance of knocking off the two vulnerable GOP Congressmen, Joe Knollenberg in Oakland County and Tim Walberg in south central Michigan.

(As a reminder, both Knollenberg's and Walberg's opponents—Gary Peters and Mark Schauer, respectively, are Blue America candidates.)

So something just doesn't make sense. Granted, the problem may lie more with my treatment of the McCain campaign as an organization that makes sound tactical decisions; this pull-out

might just be one of McCain's increasingly frequent panicked moves. That is almost certainly the most logical explanation: the absolutely abysmal management of the McCain campaign.

But I wonder whether there's not something more.

Part of me wonders whether there's a connection between McCain's hasty withdrawal and another move yesterday, that of James Carabelli's defamation suit against the Michigan Messenger for their report that the MI GOP was going to use foreclosure lists to challenge voters' right to vote in November (TPM reported on this today, but I first learned of it at about the same time I learned of the pull-out yesterday).

Because that suit is just as weird, in some ways, as the withdrawal.

As of a while ago, the Center for Independent Media and Michigan Messenger still hadn't gotten a copy of the complaint. And never—not since the MM first published the foreclosure story on September 10, has Carabelli asked for a retraction. And, as TPM reports, Carabelli won't reveal who's paying his legal fees.

Matt Davis, the attorney for the plaintiff in the defamation suit filed against the *Michigan Messenger* was quite talkative about the particulars of the suit when TPMmuckraker called him this morning, but declined to say who was paying his legal fees.

"I don't comment on my clients," Davis said in answer to inquiries about who was employing him, but directed us to the spokesman for the Michigan Republican party for further questions.

By all appearances (particularly given the confidence MM has in their story), this is a SLAPP suit designed to either cow MM, or the larger CIM organization, which has outlets in

key swing states: Minnesota, Colorado, Iowa, New Mexico, and Washington (and employes Spencer Ackerman in their DC Independent site). But Matt Davis doesn't want you to know who's behind his SLAPP suit.

Honestly, I don't know that there's a connection. But there's something weird in both events—and both happened to occur at the same time.