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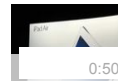
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Clinton First Campaign Trip Aims to Rally Virginia Votes

By John McCormick - Oct 17, 2013 10:00 PM MT

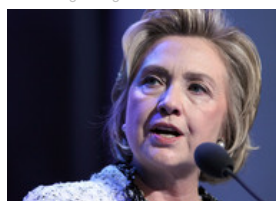
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Q QUEUE

Hillary Clinton is back in the arena.

The former U.S. secretary of state will make her first campaign-trail trip since stepping down from her diplomatic post in February when she heads to the swing state of Virginia tomorrow to help an old family friend.

Enlarge image



Former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton speaks during the annual meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative in New York, on Sept. 25, 2013. Photographer: Jin Lee/Bloomberg

Clinton's appearance for gubernatorial candidate Terry McAuliffe, who served as campaign chairman for her unsuccessful 2008 presidential bid, is the type of many such requests she's likely to receive as she weighs her own political future and gathers favors for a potential 2016 White House bid.

State parties and candidates in such early caucus and primary states as Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina traditionally ask party headliners to help with fundraising and campaign appeals during the midterm elections. The

invitations that Clinton, 65, accepts will be closely watched for hints about her own intentions.

"People develop certain expectations that a potential presidential candidate will come out and help with party-building activities and campaigning," said Kathy Sullivan, a former chairwoman of the New Hampshire Democratic Party who remains a member of the Democratic National Committee. "It puts her in a bit of a bind."

Clinton, who is also a former U.S. senator from New York, will be given more leeway by party activists and politicians because most Democrats understand she's in heavy demand, Sullivan said.

Carefully Watched

"If she were to give a positive response to everyone who would want to have her, the former secretary of state would never have time to go home," Sullivan said. "What she does is watched so carefully, I would understand if she is very circumspect about the number of appearances she might make."

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Requests for Clinton's time are likely to be most common from Democrats seeking a boost with female voters, as is the case in the [Virginia](#) race where McAuliffe's main opponent is Republican state Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli.

Her popularity with women stems in part from the prospect that she could make history in 2016 by being elected the first U.S. female president. Among Democrats, 61 percent say they'd vote for Clinton if the primaries were held now, according to a Quinnipiac University national [poll](#) conducted Sept. 23-29. Within that group, 66 percent of women and 54 percent of men say they would back Clinton.

Her scheduled stop with McAuliffe in a northern Virginia suburb is built around the theme of "Women for Terry," and the rally will include appearances by the candidate's wife, Dorothy, and other female supporters ahead of the state's Nov. 5 election.

Presidential Help

Former President Bill Clinton has also been helping McAuliffe, who was a leading fundraiser for his White House bids. Earlier this week, McAuliffe reported he'd raised more than \$6.2 million in September. Cuccinelli said he'd collected \$3.4 million.

Polling in Virginia shows McAuliffe with a lead in a state that, after being carried by Republican presidential candidates for 44 years, voted for President [Barack Obama](#) in 2008 and 2012 and is expected to be a contested state in 2016.

A NBC News/Marist [poll](#) released yesterday showed McAuliffe leading Cuccinelli by 8 percentage points among likely voters, 46 percent to 38 percent, with Libertarian candidate Robert Sarvis at 9 percent. McAuliffe had a 7-point lead in a [survey](#) released Oct. 15 by Virginia's Christopher Newport University, an edge fueled by a 14-point advantage among likely women voters.

Cuccinelli's Record

McAuliffe is working to exploit the gender gap by highlighting Cuccinelli's support for defunding the women's health organization Planned Parenthood, an operator of abortion clinics, and legislation recognizing life from the moment of fertilization, which critics contend would lead to a ban on some birth control.

Hillary Clinton recently raised her profile in speeches often focused on women's and children issues. She's also accepted more than a dozen awards this year from national groups and is working on a [memoir](#) due out in June. She's has yet to announce whether she will seek the presidency.

"I'm not in any hurry," she [told](#) New York magazine last month in what was her first extended interview since leaving the State Department. "I think it's a serious decision, not to be made lightly, but it's also not one that has to be made soon."

Sullivan, the former New Hampshire Democratic chairwoman, said potential 2016 presidential candidates have been slower than usual to visit her state because of Clinton.

"It's been pretty quiet because so many people are waiting to see what Hillary Clinton is going to do," she said.

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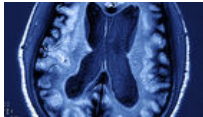
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