



## E-Book: Obama Campaign Fraught With Political Turmoil

The Obama campaign, hailed in 2008 for its unparalleled coherence and fundraising strategies, is enduring a range of political feuds and personal disagreements that has left it in severe disorder. Differences in ideology, along with an array of personal disputes, have overshadowed the efficacy of Obama's 2008 campaign, according to a number of current and former Obama advisers.



In a damning new e-book, [Obama's Last Stand](#), written by Glenn Thrush and released by POLITICO and Random House, sources have highlighted the president himself, who has expressed grave discontent with actions pursued by his campaign. The exposé contains interviews with dozens of current and former members of the Obama team, illuminating how the attitude of the 2012 reelection effort has evolved — with the president's character and morals influencing his campaign just as compellingly as they did in 2008.

Thrush begins with Vice President Joe Biden's slipup in May when he disclosed his approval for gay marriage, forcing Obama to do the same, nudging the president into a polarizing political situation he preferred to avoid at the time. In a meeting with the president, Biden apologized for his misstep and blamed campaign manager Jim Messina, among other Obama aides, for "throwing him under the bus."

Attempting to relieve Biden's irritation, Obama [responded](#), "Look, Joe, there are people who want to divide us. You and I have to be on the same page from now on. You and I have to make sure that we don't get divided." POLITICO reported on another instance that revealed tension among Obama and various members of his campaign team:

Obama personally dispatched senior West Wing aides to Chicago — led by David Plouffe and Pete Rouse — to better coordinate operations between the White House and Chicago. He was especially irritated by what he viewed as self-promotion by subordinates — and fumed that ad consultant Jim Margolis had appeared in a *New York Times* profile on Obama's negative ad operation. Margolis sent a mea culpa to Obama and the staff, but Obama remained miffed.

Indeed, Obama's growing dissatisfaction with the campaign has been an evolving theme of his 2012 reelection effort. In May, the campaign dispatched senior operative David Axelrod to Boston to deliver a public attack on GOP presidential rival Mitt Romney on the steps of the State House.

As Axelrod was confronted by a group of pro-Romney hecklers chorusing "Axel-Fraud," the president was visibly disgusted with the event. "We aren't going to do that kind of thing again, are we?" he asked, more as an order than as a question. Obama has no problem with putting up a fight, aides affirmed, but he can't stand appearing foolish in front of the media.

Meanwhile, the campaign's effort in Chicago has been consistently embroiled in drama, including a heated conflict between Axelrod and fellow senior operative Stephanie Cutter that left them barely on speaking terms. Moreover, growing antagonism about the competence of Democratic National Committee Chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz has spurred conflict among the president and his



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on August 20, 2012

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advisers.

Numerous Obama staff members have questioned whether Wasserman Schultz was the right decision for the DNC chair, as her choice of staff and hyper-partisanship on national radio and TV programs have left them perturbed. Suspicion about the competence of certain staff members has grown so intensive that the Obama brain trust covertly employed two internal focus studies to find out the esteem of top White House officials and staff members. Among those sampled were Cutter, Axelrod, former press secretary Robert Gibbs, and Wasserman Schultz — the latter of whom ranked at the bottom of the list.

POLITICO also explained the president's often combative remarks toward his political opponents:

Obama's trash-talking competitiveness, a trait that has defined him since his days on the court as a basketball-obsessed teenager in Hawaii, was on display one night last February, when the president spotted a woman he knew was close to Sen. Marco Rubio in a Florida hotel lobby. "Is your boy going to go for [vice president]?" the president asked her. Maybe, she replied.

"Well," he said, chuckling, according to a person who witnessed the encounter. "Tell your boy to watch it. He might get his ass kicked."

Among other revealing problems within the Obama campaign, Thrush reports that Obama has told advisers "that Romney stood for 'nothing,'" and that his contender was a "weak" candidate. "Too weak to stand up to his own money men, too weak to defend his own moderate record as the man who signed into law the first health insurance mandate as Massachusetts governor in 2006, too weak to admit Obama had done a single thing right as president," Thrush writes.

One source said Obama fears "a nightmare scenario in which Romney beat him, Republicans won both houses (of Congress), and two liberal Supreme Court justices quickly departed the bench." Another source added that sometimes Obama has "a deep uneasiness, bordering on anxiety, that Romney would win and steal credit for all of Obama's hard work."

Thrush's findings illuminate speculation that Obama's 2012 reelection effort has been confronted with a slew of political and organizational blunders — a 180-degree turn from his landmark campaigning accomplishments from four years ago.

*Photo of Barack Obama: AP Images*



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