

Clinton has broad support in Logan Co town - 5/2/08
By Anna Sale

Lead: Polls and national pundits aren't giving Barack Obama much hope for a victory in West Virginia. A March poll showed Hillary Clinton leading Obama by 28 percentage points, with 18 percent undecided.

Bloggers and national commentators have focused on Clinton's strong support in Appalachia. She has dominated Appalachian counties so far.

Anna Sale visited Logan County this week to see if the word on the street matches these national projections. And at least in the small town of Man in Logan County, Hillary Clinton has nothing to worry about this primary season.

Sale: Man High school's website reads "Home of the Hillbillies...and proud of it!" The small town has just over 700 residents, and like many southern west Virginia towns, it's main street sports two barber shops, a handful of lunch spots, and other local stores.

It's in a county where 86% of voters are registered Democrats, but Republicans have been getting more support in presidential elections. Al Gore won Logan County with 62% of the vote, but four years later, John Kerry edged George Bush in the county by just 5 points. And this primary season, voters in Man aren't happy about their choices on May 13.

Justice: I don't think we have a whole lot of choices.

Sale: Stephanie Justice brought her two kids into Floyd's barber shop. She's supporting Clinton in the primary, but not without reservations.

Justice: Well, I liked Bill Clinton real well, and I think, I agree with a lot of the things she says. I don't really, I don't know that I agree with a woman president, but if it came down to it, and Obama won the primary, I would vote Republican.

Sale: She says she doesn't believe that Obama is Christian. She believes he's a Muslim. But that's not the only reason she doesn't like him.

Justice: I just don't trust him, I don't know why. He gives me the creeps. And his wife says this is the first time she's ever been proud of America. I don't know how you can be a First Lady and not say you're proud to be an American, you know what I mean? You want to help a country that you're not even proud of? So, I don't know, you know, Hillary screams American, you know.

Sale: Down the row of seats at the barber shop, 72 year-old James Daniels is even less happy with his choices in the primary.

Daniels: Presidential race we don't have much of a choice.

Sale: He says he's not going to vote for Obama, but he can't support Hillary either.

Daniels: Well, I like Hillary the best, but I couldn't vote for her because she'd be usurping the authority over me. And the man's not supposed to be over...the man's supposed to be over the woman." :13

Sale: Down the street at M&J Jewelers, a popular gatherings spot for locals, William Marich says Hillary Clinton won't be getting his vote in the primary. He doesn't trust her, going back to the Whitewater scandal during her husband's administration.

Marich: I don't know like a liar. And if you're going to lie about one thing, you're to lie about everything.

Sale: He expects to vote for Obama in the primary, but not because he likes him better. It's for strategic reasons.

Marich: I'm going to be honest with you. I'm going to probably vote for Obama, and I'm going to tell you exactly why. It's because McCain can beat Obama, but I don't know if he can beat Hillary in the general.

Sale: Brian Blankenship also stopped into the jewelry store from his barber shop next store. McCain will also be his candidate in the fall, but Hillary Clinton's getting his vote in the primary.

Blankenship: It was really a toss-up between the two until the preacher started talking, and I don't see how Obama couldn't gone to that church for twenty years, and not heard the preacher preached the things he preached. I think he knew.

Sale: So for you, it's this preacher stuff...

Blankenship: He's a good speaker. He really makes sense when he talks. But I believe he believes a little bit like the preacher did, or he wouldn't gotten out of that church before he was in the presidential race and it all come up.

Sale: But neither Democrat will get Blankenship's vote in November. He's voting for McCain.

Blankenship: because I think that he'll keep the war going and that'll make more coal be produced.

Sale: More coal?

Blankenship: Mmm-hmm.

Sale: So you're skeptical of the plans to pull out of Iraq. You don't think that'll be good for West Virginia?

Blankenship: Well, there weren't no coal mining jobs until we went into Iraq.

Sale: And Blankenship says he's only had two customers in his barber shop who say they'll vote for Obama if he's the Democratic candidate in the fall. The rest won't. The reason?

Blankenship: I'd say maybe because he's black, most of them." :02

Sale: Nobody else referred to race on tape when talking about what turned them off about Obama, though one man, once the recorder was turned off, said he's not ready for a black president. And then there's Obama's name.

Mosley: Barack Hussein Obama. They don't like for us to say his name, but it is his name.

Sale: Peggy Mosley says she doesn't think Obama has the necessary the experience. She's a strong supporter of Clinton and is volunteering with the campaign.

Mosley: You know, West Virginia loved Bill Clinton, and to have him back in the White House, you can't tell me he's not going to help Hillary. So I'm really looking forward to that." :10

Sale: That's where the real split is in Man – not about who you want to win the primary, but who you ultimately want in the White House. And at least for now in this town, McCain can expect to poach more than a few local Democratic votes come November, particularly if Obama is the nominee.

For WV Public Broadcasting, I'm Anna Sale in Man.