

Democrats' Drive for Unity Takes on Added Dimension

Hillary Clinton was set to become the first woman presidential nominee of a major U.S. party on Tuesday, a historic moment that Democrats hope will help eclipse rancor between supporters of Clinton and her rival in the primary contests, Bernie Sanders.

The party will seek to burnish Clinton's biography and make its formal nomination on the second day of a convention that began on Monday with anti-Clinton feeling among die-hard Sanders supporters on full and vocal display.

Sanders, one of the main speakers on the first evening, portrayed Clinton as a fellow soldier in his fight for economic equality, but some of his supporters booed the mere mention of her name.

He and the other main speakers on Monday, liberal favorite U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren and first lady Michelle Obama, offered stirring endorsements of Clinton as the party tried to push through the discord and find a common goal in beating Republican Donald Trump in the Nov. 8 election.

The furor in Philadelphia was a setback to Democrats' hopes that their convention would contrast with Trump's sometimes chaotic White House campaign and show the party moving beyond the bruising primary battle between Sanders, 74, a U.S. senator from Vermont, and former Secretary of State Clinton, 68.

Supporters see Clinton's Washington credentials—she has also been a first lady and a U.S. senator—as showing she has the experience needed for the White House. Detractors view her as too cozy with the establishment, and with political baggage dating back to the start of her husband's first term in 1993.

Opinion polls show Clinton as deeply unpopular with some Americans. Recent polls have given her “unfavorable” ratings that average 55.4 percent, according to the RealClear Politics website. Trump has a similarly poor number, with “unfavorable” ratings averaging 56.9 percent.

The convention’s second day is aimed at highlighting Clinton’s work on issues such as women, families and healthcare and as the country’s top diplomat, campaign officials said. It will include a prime-time speech by her husband, former President Bill Clinton, and the formalities of nominating Clinton to the White House.

NBC and CNN reported on Tuesday that talks were under way to have Sanders take part in the nomination process, in a sign of party unity.

Jess McIntosh, director of communications outreach for the Clinton campaign, did not confirm this on CNN but said, “It wouldn’t surprise me that talks like that are happening.”

In a show-stealing speech on Monday night, Michelle Obama linked that coming landmark nomination to her own husband’s role as the first black U.S. president, saying that: “Because of Hillary Clinton, my daughters and all our sons and daughters now take for granted that a woman can be president of the United States.”

‘MORE SUBSTANTIVE’ NOMINATING PROCESS

Sanders, who drew a fervent following of youth and liberals during a primary campaign that called for a tough hand on Wall Street and more aggressive steps to counter social inequality, struggled on Monday to get his own supporters in line.

At a meeting before the convention began, he was jeered by his own delegates when he urged them to back Clinton and focus on defeating Trump, a man he called a “bully and a demagogue.”

"We want Bernie!" they shouted in anger at both Clinton's victory in the race for the Democratic nomination and emails leaked on Friday suggesting the party leadership had tried to sabotage Sanders' insurgent campaign.

"Brothers and sisters, this is the real world that we live in," Sanders pleaded.

Clinton representatives sought on Tuesday to put the boos and chants in a positive light.

"It's something we respect," campaign communications director Jennifer Palmieri said of the Sanders delegates' noisy support for him. "It is also something that I think has made our party's nominating process ... much more substantive."

Trump reveled in the Democrats' opening day disorder, and made a pitch for Sanders voters to turn to him.

"Sad to watch Bernie Sanders abandon his revolution. We welcome all voters who want to fix our rigged system and bring back our jobs," Trump said on Twitter. Sanders had "totally sold out" to Clinton, he added in another tweet.

A Clinton campaign official noted on Tuesday that while Sanders had backed Clinton, the runner-up in the Republican primary contest, U.S. Senator Ted Cruz, refused to endorse Trump at his party's convention last week.

Trump, a 70-year-old New York businessman who has never been elected to public office, has lagged Clinton in most national opinion polls for months. Benefiting from a traditional post-convention "bump," he pulled just ahead of her in at least one survey on Monday.

"We have an enormous task ahead of us," Democratic leader Donna Brazile told a gathering of women delegates on Tuesday. "This is not going to be an easy election, but it's an election we will win with dignity," said Brazile, a vice

chairwoman of the Democratic National Committee.

In the opening hours of the convention on Monday, party officials struggled to carry out business as angry Sanders supporters roared their disapproval, drawing a deafening response from Clinton delegates.

Sanders tried to head off the disruptions, sending an email to delegates as the convention opened urging them not to interrupt the proceedings.

Several speakers pleaded for peace between the factions. Comedian Sarah Silverman, a Sanders supporter, said she would support Clinton “with gusto” and sternly added, “To the ‘Bernie or Bust’ people, you’re being ridiculous.”

Democratic National Committee Chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz resigned, effective at the end of the convention, over the email controversy. The committee issued an apology on Monday to Sanders, his supporters, and the whole party for the email flap and said it would take action to ensure it never happens again.

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