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OBAMA OR MCCAIN?

Many Fil-Ams still undecided on US vote

By Nimfa U. Rueda
Philippine Daily Inquirer
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LOS ANGELES—With the US elections just nine days away, Filipino-American supporters of Barack Obama and John McCain are e-mailing, blogging and using flyers in a stepped-up campaign to sway undecided voters in battleground states.

A recent National Asian American Survey (NAAS) showed 35 percent of Filipino-Americans were for Obama while 29 percent favored McCain. A big chunk—34 percent—remained undecided.

A big percentage of undecided voters, an average of 34 percent, also emerged among the other Asian-American subgroups surveyed—the Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Vietnamese and Indians.

Researchers who conducted the survey believe these undecided voters could have an impact in swing states on the presidential race between the Democrat's Obama and the Republican's McCain.

"We have been working extra harder and getting down to the grass roots in (Asian) communities in battleground states," said Andrew Quinio, a 22-year-old Fil-Am member of Asian Americans for McCain.

Quinio has been busy e-mailing, blogging and sending letters and articles to local newspapers in support of McCain.

In Virginia, one of the battleground states, Fil-Am community leader Vellie Sandalo Dietrich Hall has been leading fund-raising efforts and distributing campaign literature and sample ballots throughout the state.

"Of course, we're also flooding our friends and kababayans with political e-mails," said Dietrich Hall, the Republican Party's chair of Asian American and Pacific Islander Outreach in Virginia and honorary chair of Women for McCain.

Critical phase

Dietrich Hall told the Philippine Daily Inquirer that her group had received a big boost from the Fil-Am supporters of Democratic Sen. Hillary Clinton, "who have converted their support to McCain and even contributed a big amount to the McCain campaign."

In San Francisco, members of the Filipinos for Obama (FFO) were to hold on Sunday their "10-day countdown to change" and had scheduled flyer distributions near churches, targeting Fil-Ams throughout Virginia.

"We are now in the critical 'get out the vote' phase of

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the campaign,” FFO political director Dexter Ligot Gordon said.

One latest survey had McCain bouncing back.

Results of a Reuters/C-SPAN/Zogby poll released on Sunday showed Obama’s lead over McCain had dropped to 5 points, with Obama at 49 percent and McCain at 44 percent among likely voters.

Obama’s lead has dropped over the last three days after hitting a high of 12 points on Thursday, according to the daily tracking poll.

Little time

Obama’s lead among voters making less than \$35,000 per year remains substantial at over 70 percent. But McCain, who had previously scored well only with the highest income brackets, now holds slight leads among voters in all income groups starting at \$35,000 and above.

“You’ve got to think that it is tax-and-spend that concerns them. Is McCain starting to connect with the middle class?” pollster John Zogby said.

For Obama, the way to cross the finish line first may be simply to stay on course and avoid game-changing mistakes.

He has the lead in most national polls, is ahead in states won by Democrat John Kerry in 2004 and is either leading or competitive in a half-dozen states won by Republican President George W. Bush.

To win, McCain will likely continue stoking doubts about Obama’s tax policies and readiness to be commander in chief.

But time is running out. *With reports from Reuters and AP*

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