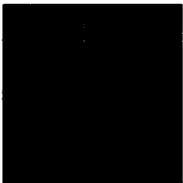


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From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, May 22, 2012 8:45 AM
To: H
Subject: FW: Michael Tomasky on Obama's Hillary Clinton-Joe Biden Switcheroo

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Sent: Tuesday, May 22, 2012 8:27 AM
To: Mills, Cheryl D
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Michael Tomasky on Obama's Hillary Clinton-Joe Biden Switcheroo

How likely is it that Obama will dump Biden for Hillary as veep? Probably not very. But recent polls suggest the president would be foolish not to consider mixing up the ticket.

by [Michael Tomasky](#) | May 22, 2012 4:45 AM EDT

Can it really be true that Mitt Romney leads Barack Obama among women? This is what *The New York Times* (and CBS) said in their latest poll—Romney 46, Obama 44. The Obama team and liberal blogs immediately went to work crapping on the poll. The methodology was weird—they called back respondents from an earlier poll. But what if...? Obama can afford a lot of things to go wrong against Romney, but one thing he absolutely cannot afford is to have no gender gap. So pondering this situation has got me thinking for the first time semi-seriously about you-know-who.

Joseph Curl of *The Washington Times* is the latest to speculate on the Hillary Clinton-Joe Biden switcheroo. Bring your machete so you can hack your way through the snark. But once you do, you'll find a reasonably persuasive argument underneath it. Clinton's positive numbers are off the charts. Biden's are so-so—both approval and disapproval sit in the 40s. Biden's putative asset, that he helps a bit with white working-class and Catholic voters, is even truer of Clinton, the famous drinker of shots in those proletarian Pennsylvania bars. And women—forget about it. An Obama-Clinton ticket would pulverize any Romney ticket on the distaff side (is that insulting? I'm just trying to avoid repeating the word "women" too much). It wouldn't matter if he put Carrie Underwood on his ticket.

I know, I know. It's silly. I can right now picture the friends reading this who will write me to say, "Mike, that's silly." It probably is. But here are a few points for your consideration that aren't silly at all.

Hillary Clinton's greatest girl-power moments.

The gender gap goes back to the early 1990s, when Bill Clinton beat George H.W. Bush among women by 8 points (Clinton 45 percent, Bush 37, Perot 17). Four years later, Clinton topped Bob Dole among women by 16 points. Al Gore beat Dubya by 11 points. John Kerry won women by just 3 points, and then in 2008, Obama punched it back up to 13, carrying women by 56 to 43 percent (see [all numbers here](#)). That's an average 10-point margin. Given that women constitute a majority of the vote, 52 to 54 percent, that's a big deal. If, say, 67 million women vote this fall, that's 6.7 million more votes for Obama among women. It will more than make up for any deficit among men. Obama actually won among men last time, 49 to 48 percent, but it seems doubtful that he will this time.

What if Obama suddenly can't count on that cushion? The odds are that he can. There's a recent PPP poll of North Carolina, and in it, Obama leads Romney among women by ... wouldn't you know it, exactly 10 points. So maybe that *Times* poll is just crazy.

With Hillary on the ticket, the gender gap in November would be 20 points. And fusing the Obama and Clinton machines like that? It would be like breeding Secretariat and Zenyatta.

On the other hand, maybe that rankly disingenuous Romney statement about 92 percent of jobs losses in the recession falling on women hit home to some degree. Surely the Republicans have also figured out that they don't want to make contraception an issue in this campaign. The Democrats in Congress seem to have botched the handling of the Violence Against Women Act. Then there is Ann Romney, the breast-cancer and MS survivor.

And finally, I have a sense that the Republicans are getting a little more sophisticated about appealing to women. They're not actually doing anything, of course; they still oppose equal pay and abortion rights and family leave and, well, everything else. But some of the rhetoric seems to have lost that edge of rage and hostility that is still there, if you just scratch a little, with regard to black people.

In other words, it may well be that Romney could close the gender gap. And if he could close it to 5 points, it will be an extremely close election.

Now bring in Hillary. Forget about it. The most consistently admired woman in America over the last 20 years? The gender gap would be 20 points. And the Obama and Clinton machines fused like that—it's like Secretariat and Zenyatta breeding. And the signal sent to Democrats and women across the country that the whole thing is being teed up for her in 2016. This would be a blowout.

And Biden, you ask? Well, the gay-marriage thing might finally have been the straw that made Obama think it's not so great having Joe around. But don't feel bad for him. He benefits from the fact that the White House would have to do this smoothly, which means Biden can't possibly just be hung out to dry. So he's going to be landing on a \$300 goose-down pillow. He gets to be secretary of state—the job he's dreamed of for years anyway!

The one question is this: How is it justified publicly? This is one of those situations when you just obviously can't tell the truth. The truth is: With Clinton, we win in a near-landslide, and with Biden, it's iffy, and we want to win. What you say is something like: This is good for the country as we face the great challenges ahead; Secretary Clinton brings her vast experience in the White House and Senate to bear, and Vice President Biden will be able to exploit his many close relationships with world leaders, blah blah blah. Everyone will know that this is gobbledygook, but Clinton's popularity now is such that it probably wouldn't matter. I'd guess that approval of such a move would be pretty high among Democrats, and even higher among independents, who feel no residual allegiance to Biden. Republicans would be fuming, which would just be more proof of the move's effectiveness.

Would it smell of desperation? Possibly. Is it still unlikely? Probably. Neither of those means it wouldn't produce a blowout.