

# Sandy Disrupts Presidential Campaign

BY DAVID ESPO AND JULIE PACE  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Eight days before the election, President Barack Obama switched from campaigner to hands-on commander of the federal response to Superstorm Sandy as it barreled across the Eastern Seaboard. Republican Mitt Romney scaled back his appearances and urged supporters to “do your very best” in donating to relief efforts.

The political pace quickened on Monday even without the customary clash of rallies and rhetoric. Romney’s allies put down \$1.2 million for a last-minute television ad campaign designed to make Pennsylvania competitive — or at least appear so — and the roll of early voters swelled past 15 million in scattered states.

With the race in its final full week, most national polls showed the two presidential rivals separated by a statistically insignificant point or two, although others said Romney had a narrow lead for the overall popular vote.

But the election will be won or lost in the nine most competitive states. Republicans claimed momentum there, but the president’s high command projected confidence. And Romney’s increasingly narrow focus on Iowa, Wisconsin and Ohio suggested he still searched for a breakthrough in the Midwest to deny Obama the 270 electoral votes needed for victory.

The president changed roles quickly during the day, highlighting the advantages of the incumbency — as long as events go smoothly. He scrapped a morning campaign appearance in Florida, boarded Air Force One for a bumpy flight to the nation’s capital and appeared before reporters in the White House not long afterward.

“We’re making sure that food and water and emergency generation is available for those communities that are going to be hardest hit,” he said. At the same time, he soberly warned that heeding evacuation orders from local authorities was paramount for those in the storm’s path.

“Do not delay. Don’t pause. Don’t question the instructions that are being given, because this is a serious storm and it could potentially have fatal consequence if people haven’t acted quickly,” he said.

The president didn’t mention the campaign in his prepared remarks, and when he was asked how the storm might affect the election, he said he wasn’t thinking along those lines. “I’m worried about the impact on families, and I’m worried about the impact on our first responders. I’m worried about the impact on our economy and on transportation,” he said. Romney went ahead with part



This man watches the waves as Hurricane Sandy approaches Long Beach on Long Island’s South Shore on Monday. (Alejandra Villa/Newsday/MCT)



Decision '12

of his campaign schedule, although he blended his appeal for political support with one for his backers to make a donation to the Red Cross or other relief agencies “in any way you can imagine to help those in harm’s way.”

“Do your very best to help,” he implored as his aides spread the word he would cancel an evening appearance in Wisconsin and a full day of campaigning Tuesday because of the storm.

He received an update on federal storm response efforts in a phone call with the deputy director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other officials.

However, the campaign said Romney “believes that states should be in charge of emergency management in responding to storms and other natural disasters in their jurisdictions” and “are in the best position to aid affected individuals and communities and to direct resources and assistance to where they are needed most. This includes help from the federal government and FEMA.”

Nearing the end of a brawl of a campaign, both Romney and the president said they hoped Americans would work together to help those in need — and an unscientific sample of voters said they liked what they were hearing.

Mike Beauregard, the owner of a cooking utensil store in Concord, N.H., said he was glad the president and Romney were cutting short their campaign trips. “The last thing first responders need is for these folks to be running around,” he said, describing himself as a political independent who leans Republican.

Chuck Sikes, manager of a furniture store in Concord, also said both candidates did the right thing. A self-described Obama supporter, he said the president “would have been criticized if he had continued campaigning as not caring for people, yet others will criticize him for returning to Washington as making it a photo op. You’re damned if you do, damned if you don’t.”

The machinery of the campaign ground on. According to the United States Elections Project at George Mason University, about 15 million ballots already have been cast, including 1.8 million in Florida and 1.5 million in North Carolina.

Democratic early voters so far outnumber Republicans in Ohio,

Iowa, North Carolina and Nevada, while the reverse is true in Colorado. The two sides are at rough parity in Florida. No votes will be counted until Nov. 6.

The expansion of television advertising into Pennsylvania began with Restore Our Future, the group that was instrumental to Romney’s success in the primaries and has worked to defeat Obama. The commercial says a “new normal” has developed as a result of the president’s economic policies, where unemployment is high, “millions of Americans have simply given up, where our children will grow up under the weight of crushing debt in a world where America is no longer the leader.”

Jim Messina, Obama’s campaign manager, told reporters to expect an ad in response. “They are not close in Pennsylvania. We’re going to win Pennsylvania, but we aren’t taking anything for granted.” Vice President Joe Biden is expected to campaign in the state before Election Day.

South Dakotans value education and recognize a great investment when they see one. As President of the Associated School Boards of South Dakota I have seen the impact that on-going budget cuts are having on children across the state. Last year alone, schools had to eliminate over 200 classroom staff across the state. Fewer teachers and support staff mean larger class sizes and less time one-on-one with students. Fortunately, this November we can reverse the cuts to our kids by passing Initiated Measure 15.

Initiated Measure 15 is a reasonable plan that will generate \$180 million through a one-penny sales tax, to be split evenly between K-12 public education and Medicaid. For just one penny we can provide a quality education for our children and ensure basic, necessary care for our children, seniors, and persons with disability.

Initiated Measure 15 is written to ensure accountability throughout the entire process so our children benefit from the investment in education. Unlike video lottery, revenue generated through the measure can never enter the General Fund and can never be used for anything other than K-12 public education or Medicaid. In the case of education, the revenue enters into a sub fund and must be disbursed quarterly back to local school districts on a per-student basis. Simple as that. When you go to the polls on November 6th you can rest assured that the revenue will not be used for other purposes.

Initiated Measure 15 protects local control and guarantees that local school districts decide how best to put the revenue to use. The measure recognizes that, just as each child has unique learning needs, each school district is unique. Voting yes on Measure 15 gives school districts the flexibility they need to deliver quality education to our kids.

Initiated Measure 15 is an opportunity for all South Dakotans to have a direct voice in the future of our state. South Dakota has long supported the right of voters to make their voice heard through the initiative process.

Your vote is powerful and I ask you to stand up and support Initiated Measure 15 and restore education funding for our kids.

**Bev Banks**  
President, Associated School Boards of South Dakota  
Paid for by Moving South Dakota Forward

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