

As Bloomberg pledges \$100 million, Wall Street boosts Biden campaign

By Patrick Martin
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Billionaire Michael Bloomberg has pledged to spend at least \$100 million to support the campaign of Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden in Florida. This announcement Sunday is only the largest pledge of support from the financial oligarchy for the Democratic campaign.

Bloomberg aide Kevin Sheekey said the pledge of virtually unlimited financial backing to Biden in Florida, the most critical “battleground” state in the 2020 election, “will allow campaign resources and other Democratic resources to be used in other states, in particular the state of Pennsylvania.”

Florida has 29 electoral votes, the most of any closely contested state, following California with 55, overwhelmingly Democratic, and Texas with 38, leaning Republican. New York state, also with 29 electoral votes, is heavily Democratic.

Only once in the last 60 years—Bill Clinton in 1992—has a candidate won the presidency while losing Florida. The last Republican to lose Florida and still win the White House was Calvin Coolidge in 1924, when the state was lightly populated swampland.

Early voting begins in Florida September 24, and Bloomberg’s money will pay for massive campaign advertising on behalf of Biden, in both English and Spanish. Campaign officials said the funds would be devoted almost entirely to television and digital ads.

Even before the Bloomberg commitment, the Biden campaign and supporting Democratic groups had outspent Trump and the Republicans by \$42 million to \$32 million. The flood of cash from the billionaire media mogul will give the Democrats a three- or four-to-one advantage over the final seven weeks of the campaign.

The efficacy of Bloomberg’s huge financial commitment is open to question. The media billionaire

spent \$1 billion (a mere one-fiftieth of his gargantuan personal fortune) on his own pursuit of the Democratic presidential nomination. He launched his campaign at a time when he believed Biden’s candidacy was near its demise, hoping that his money might forestall the nomination of Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders.

The sudden revival of Biden’s campaign with his victory in South Carolina in February and then in the Super Tuesday primaries on March 3 led Bloomberg to abandon his own efforts and endorse the former vice president, since their right-wing views on a range of topics, and particularly on foreign policy, were virtually identical.

Since then, Bloomberg has transferred \$20 million from his abortive presidential campaign to the Democratic National Committee, as well as pumping in another \$120 million to local, state and congressional campaigns, making him by far the largest single backer of the Democratic Party.

Florida is only the most glaring example of the general trend in the 2020 election, in which the financial oligarchy and Wall Street have indicated a distinct preference for Biden and backed it up with heavy financial commitments.

During August, the Biden campaign broke all records for fundraising in a single month, raking in \$365 million, nearly double the previous record of \$203 million set by the campaign of Barack Obama in September 2008, and more than Hillary Clinton and Trump combined to raise, in August 2016, \$233 million. The Trump campaign also broke the Obama record, but its total of \$210 million in August was far behind the pace set by the Democrats.

Approximately \$205 million of the \$365 million came through online donations, including 1.5 million new donors. This is more an indication of the

widespread hostility to Trump among millions of working-class and middle-class people than any groundswell of support for Biden, who personifies the corrupt US political establishment, having spent 36 years in the Senate before his eight years as Obama's vice president.

That means that \$160 million—a near-record amount by itself—was raised through large donations from wealthy supporters of the Democratic Party. While Trump continues to rake in the lion's share of support from industries such as oil and gas, mining and real estate, Biden has collected the bulk of financial backing from the banks, hedge funds and insurance industry.

Under rules set by the Federal Election Commission, a wealthy donor can now give as much as \$830,600 to support a presidential candidate, routing much of the money through federal and state party committees rather than the candidate's own campaign.

The result of the disparity in fundraising throughout the summer is that the Democratic presidential campaign has now caught up with and even surpassed Trump's war chest. The Trump reelection campaign, despite raising an unprecedented \$1.1 billion, has less cash on hand for the fall than the Biden campaign. According to press accounts, more than one-third of the money raised by the Trump campaign was used to pay the expenses of fundraising itself.

There were several reports last week that the Trump campaign was experiencing a "cash crunch," and was unable to sustain advertising in all 15 of the so-called battleground states. Both the *Washington Post* and Bloomberg News reported that Trump campaign manager Bill Stepien has halted television advertising in Michigan and Pennsylvania at least temporarily, and that Biden was outspending Trump in nearly every closely contested state.

Stepien replaced Brad Parscale as campaign manager in July, at least in part because of concerns that Parscale had squandered Trump's substantial initial fundraising advantage.

According to the media tracking firm Advertising Analytics, the Biden campaign spent \$17 million in television and digital advertising in nine battleground states during the week of September 3, compared to \$4 million by the Trump campaign.

The Clinton campaign outspent Trump by similar margins in 2016, but Trump campaign aides had

boasted they would not face such a deficit in 2020. Trump has hinted he would seek to make up the difference from his personal fortune, but there has been no sign yet of any direct outlay by the billionaire to back his own campaign.

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