

## Barack Obirdma Clinches Parrot Flock Presidency

**Faux presidential bird election is held by The Gabriel Foundation to raise awareness.**

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Courtesy of Karen Biderman  
Bumper stickers of Obirdma-Birden and MaCawn-Greylin.

After months of encouraging bird lovers to “flock the vote,” The Gabriel Foundation elected its first flock president. Freshly nominated on November 4, Barack Obirdma and his vice president, Senator Joe Birden, followed the same path of success that the real-life presidential and vice presidential candidates, Barack Obama and Joe Biden, took — only they campaigned on issues from a bird’s eye view.

The Gabriel Foundation, a non-profit parrot welfare organization based in Colorado, formed its first flock presidential election this year to coincide with the U.S. presidential election after seeing an opportunity to raise awareness for its cause. The organization, which has its own aviary and promotes education, conservation, rescue and rehabilitation of birds, modeled a faux election to draw attention to the problems of the parrot world that the citizens of the nation might not be aware of.

While human health care, education and immigration issues are familiar to most who voted in the general election, how they apply to a bird’s world is not common knowledge. Luckily, Obirdma and Birden — and their rivals, Senator John MaCawn and Governor Sarah Greylin — have campaigned long and hard to bring these issues to the forefront of citizens’ minds.

Much like the real election, this presidential campaign came at a critical time. Cori Knol, outreach web development and membership manager for The Gabriel Foundation, said that during the current economic climate, non-profit organizations are feeling the pull of financial constraints.

“It’s tough when you’re caring for animals,” she said. “It’s definitely been a little slow.”

With outreach efforts like the flock election, the foundation hopes to counter the effects of the economic crisis and bring in members and donations to its cause.

Like Obama, Obirdma worked hard to enforce his platform of “change you can believe in” for his party, the Beakocrats. As a hyacinth macaw, Obirdma put emphasis on the blue theme of his party, and his sulphur-crested cockatoo running mate, Senator Birden, complemented the ticket with years of aviary experience.

Contrastingly, Senator MaCawn flew through the campaign with a motto of “Flock First” to embody his party, the Feathericans, who were represented by a red theme resembling MaCawn’s scarlet macaw species. When choosing his running mate, MaCawn picked a renowned whistleblower and African grey parrot, Governor Greylin, to add youth, insight and energy to the party’s ticket.

After the campaign kicked off in August 2008, voters were eager and willing to cast their ballots online, where The Gabriel Foundation website hosted its poll. Not surprisingly, Knol said the results of the bird election tended to reflect those in the real presidential election.

“As the country went, so did our election,” she said. “Most people seemed to be voting for the candidate that went with theirs in the national election.”

Knol noted that while MaCawn pulled ahead in the flock election for a while, Obirdma became the clear winner in the end. With a campaign emphasizing universal healthcare for all parrots, improved parrot education classes and materials, and efforts toward environmental and parrot conservation, Obirdma moved to the front with ease. Come November 4, 2008, the flock election concluded with 5,576 votes for Obirdma and 4,443 for MaCawn.

Though the election may be all said and done, the candidates aren’t.

“When people visit the aviary, they’ll be able to meet Obirdma and MaCawn,” Knol said. “Despite his loss, he’s still over there, somewhere in Congress.”

And while MaCawn might not have clinched the presidency, he and Greylin continue to stand for the issues most important to them: illegal immigration, exportation and trapping of birds; biosecurity problems like psittacine diseases; and comprehensive senior “psittacine” care for parrots.

For those who remain inspired by the campaign, memorabilia like T-shirts, doggy shirts and stickers are still available on the website. Through the campaign, The Gabriel Foundation gained 20 new or renewing members and sold merchandise “pretty regularly,” Knol said.

While the polls attracted an impressive number of voters, whether or not the real Obama and McCain voted in the flock election remains uncertain.

“You know, we sent them press releases and we did not hear back, so I am not sure,” Knol said.