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Democratic rally

Obama, Biden visit Detroit to talk about economy

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Detroit — Thousands of people packed onto Detroit's Woodward Avenue on Sunday to catch a glimpse of the Democratic presidential running mates, but the tone of the day's speeches was somber despite the crowd's fervor. Both Sens. Barack Obama and Joe Biden centered their remarks on the nation's economic crisis, which they blamed on the Bush administration's lack of regulation.

Obama condemned his opponent, Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., for supporting the lax business regulations that contributed to the crisis.

"He talks about getting tough on (big business), but you can't make up for 26 years in 26 days," Obama said.

Biden also criticized McCain for saying last week that the economy was stable.

"At 9 a.m. last Monday morning, he said again the fundamentals of the economy are strong," Biden said. "At 11 o'clock Monday morning, he said we had a great economic crisis on our hands."

At the time, Congress was drawing close to an agreement on the \$700 billion federal bailout plan, and Obama praised its action but said he would like to see a plan to bail out the



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Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama speaks to a crowd of thousands at a rally Sunday in front of the Detroit Public Library. Obama touched on points about the current economic crisis and urged citizens to register to vote.

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American citizens whose homes had been foreclosed.

“We cannot and will not simply bail out Wall Street without helping the Americans who are struggling to stay in their homes,” he said.

Paramedics at the rally also were kept busy during the sweltering afternoon, dealing with several heat-related injuries in the crowd. Obama came to one woman’s rescue, tossing her a water bottle after she fainted near the stage.

In the wake of Friday’s foreign policy debate, Biden said he believes Obama outshined McCain and criticized McCain’s commitment to victory in Iraq and lack of aggression in Afghanistan.

“John McCain said he’d follow Osama Bin Laden to the gates of hell,” Biden said. “Barack Obama will follow him to where he lives, then send him to hell. He lives in Afghanistan, he does not live in Iraq.”

The rally doubled as a massive voter registration drive when the candidates told the crowd to encourage friends and family to vote.

Before attendees could pass through security, they were asked to sign a pledge to register three people.

Voter registration forms floated throughout the crowd, and the candidates urged audience members to sign them if they were not registered.

“Be a part of the world’s largest voter registration drive,” Obama said. “If every single one of you go out and find one more person or two more people to register, that could be the difference-maker.”

U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., was among the audience members attending the event.

Stabenow said voter registration will be key to a win.

“We need people that have been affected by a disaster for the last eight years to come out and vote for a different approach,” she said. “I’m hoping that people who are looking around and saying ‘We’ve had enough’ will vote for Barack.”

University of Detroit Mercy student Andrew Donaldson said he plans to fulfill his pledge, beginning with a family friend who believes her vote doesn’t count.

“There’s a lot of people that will talk and talk and talk about how much they hate everything, but they won’t actually go out and vote,” Donaldson said. “We’re going to try to get her to register.”

Detroit Mayor Ken Cockrel Jr. addressed the crowd in one of his first public appearances since taking

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office Sept. 17.

Cockrel let the candidates know that Michigan's economic well-being should be a central concern of the next president.

"It's often been said that when Detroit coughs, America catches a cold," Cockrel said.

"We need a new prescription."

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