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Obama Plays Up Family Story, Values in Indiana

Nick Timiraos reports on the presidential race from Indianapolis:

Barack Obama is playing up his biography and values as he makes his final swing through Indiana this weekend.

The Illinois senator was joined by his wife, Michelle, and daughters Malia, 9, and Sasha, 6, on Saturday, and he began the day with a speech at an Indianapolis high school designed to set the tone for his final week.

He expressed his vision for the role of government by telling his family story, from the grandfather who fought in World War II and, upon returning home, received an education on the GI Bill and a home loan from the Federal Housing Administration. But that American dream shared by his grandparents, his mother, and he and his wife, had faded for many Americans because of Washington's intransigence. "Where is that America today?" he asked.

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Obama slammed the politicians—and, implicitly, his rivals—for checking “the polls before they check their gut,” he said. “That kind of politics may get them where they need to go, but it doesn't get America to where we need to go.”

As he has in recent days, Obama slammed his rival Hillary Clinton and likely Republican nominee John McCain for supporting a three month suspension of the federal gas tax, which has been roundly criticized by economists and editorial boards. Obama also mocked the Clinton campaign for having Steve Elmendorf, a Clinton supporter whose lobbyist firms have represented oil companies, defend the gas tax measure on cable television Friday.

Rather than make a series of speeches, as he did in a train tour in the run-up to the Pennsylvania primary or in raucous rallies before the Texas primary, Obama's schedule emphasized smaller, more intimate settings with voters. Saturday afternoon, Obama planned to attend a picnic in Noblesville, Ind., with his family, a potluck dinner in Kempton at a home built by his great great grandfather, and an ice cream social at a roller skate rink in Lafayette.

The focus on family and values comes after what Obama conceded had been a “rough week.” Earlier Saturday, he dismissed concerns over character issues as minor distractions that wouldn't help the country solve its problems. He asked voters to decide “that this election is bigger than flag pins or sniper fire or comments of a former pastor, bigger than the differences between what we look like or where we come from or what party we belong to.”

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