



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on January 24, 2013

Obama Reelection Team to Become Nonprofit Promoter of Obama's Agenda

The political organization that helped secure President Obama's reelection is being turned into a nonprofit group funded by corporate money that will help advocate the president's second term agenda. This unprecedented move has some critics concerned at the possibility for cronyism and collusion.



Fox News [reports](#), "Democratic officials familiar with the plan said Thursday [Jan. 17] the tax-exempt organization will be called Organizing for Action and seeks to harness the energy of the president's reelection campaign for future legislative fights."

The group will be a 501(c)(4) under the federal tax code, which permits tax-exempt status to organizations so long as their sole activity is not to influence an election. Therefore, the group cannot purchase ads in support of a candidate, but as a non-profit organization, could run ads in support of particular issues.

Officials indicate that the group will be separate from the Democratic National Committee, and will advocate issues such as gun control and immigration reform.

"Following in the footsteps of the campaign you built, Organizing for Action will be an unparalleled force in American politics," Obama said in an e-mail to supporters Friday. "It will work to turn our shared values into legislative action, and it'll empower the next generation of leaders in our movement."

President Obama's 2012 campaign manager, Jim Messina, will serve as Organizing for America's national chairman, while White House official Jon Carson will be leaving the Obama administration to become the group's executive director. The organization will be accepting donations from individuals and corporations, but not from lobbyists and political action committees, and will disclose the identities of its donors.

The board for the organization will be comprised of former White House and campaign aides, including former White House press secretary Robert Gibbs, campaign officials Stephanie Cutter, Jennifer O'Malley-Dillon and Julianna Smoot, as well as Frank White, a businessman and Obama donor.

This marks the first time a president has transformed his presidential campaign into an outside group with the sole purpose of promoting his political agenda, observes Fox News.

Noting Obama's unique campaign approach in 2008, utilizing grassroots techniques as well as "cutting edge technology," the [Associated Press writes](#) that the president had amassed "legions of backers" including huge numbers of minority and young voters. Following his election in 2008, the president housed "the backbone of his campaign — his massive email list, which at the time included roughly 12



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million to 13 million contacts, its technological functions and its network of neighborhood team leaders — at the DNC, which historically has served as the president’s political arm.”

The AP continues, “The grass-roots mobilizing and fundraising operation was dubbed Organizing for America, and it sought to marshal support for Obama’s health care overhaul during the first term. But it struggled to have much impact on the divisive debate and essentially became a campaign-in-waiting for Obama ahead of his re-election race.”

By the 2012 election, Obama virtually “had a full-scale political operation at the ready.”

And following his reelection, Democrats questioned whether Obama would turn over his campaign operation to the Democratic National Committee for the future of the party. But after consideration, the re-election team decided that the best way to move forward was to become a non-profit and advocate for the president’s key issues.

As observed by Fox News, however, the decision to be separate from the DNC “could [rile](#) some Democrats who have grumbled that the president was more interested in protecting his own ‘brand,’ in political speak, than in building the party.”

“It’s a big question mark right now,” Minnesota Democratic Chairman Ken Martin said in a Politico report. “We were told before the end of this campaign that all of that [[Obama](#) campaign machinery] would fold into state parties. Now we’re being told something different.”

DNC committee member Krystal Thraikill articulated criticism about the decision to *The Hill*.

“I don’t know how splitting things apart is conducive to progress. When you start looking at competitive interests that are trying to move in the same direction, why wouldn’t you all be on the same page?”

Members of the DNC were reportedly caught off guard by the president’s decision. But DNC Chairwoman Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.) sought to quell members’ concerns about Organizing for America.

“One of the powerful lessons we learned from our victory this cycle is that we can’t start from scratch every four years. I’m thrilled that the president has announced that OFA will not end with the 2012 elections,” Wasserman Schultz said at the DNC meeting.

Some are [concerned](#) that the creation of a nonprofit group so close to the president has the potential for ethical violations. Craig Holman of the watchdog group Public Citizen asserts that the group’s receipt of corporate and special interest money could “pose some very serious problems.”

“It’s ironic and puzzling that a grassroots organization with a public interest agenda is going to take unlimited corporate money. It doesn’t square,” [said](#) Mary Boyle of Common Cause. “There’s one reason that corporations spend money on politics — they’re looking for something in return.”

Matthew Vadum, author of “[Subversion, Inc.](#): How Obama’s ACORN Red Shirts Are Still Terrorizing and Ripping Off American Taxpayers,” reports in FrontPageMag.com, the new group sets the stage for more administration-supported political bullies.

“Obama will be able to pursue his politics from inside government and from outside through his Organizing for Action thug army,” Vadum writes.

And Adam Green, co-founder of the Progressive Change Campaign Committee, has criticized OFA’s decision to accept money from corporations.



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“They won’t take money from MoveOn, Democracy for America, or Progressive Change Campaign Committee PACs, but will accept million-dollar checks from Bank of America and Goldman Sachs? What’s the principle there? No big bank or corporation will donate million-dollar checks to OFA without the expectation that it will impact which issues they engage on, and that’s very troubling,” Green said.

Fox News also observes that the group’s acceptance of corporate donations “reflects Obama’s shifting stance on campaign finance.” During President Obama’s first campaign, he was an opponent of the influence of “super” political action committees on campaigns because of their ability to raise unlimited funds for candidates. He later, however, signed off for Democrats to create super PACs.

Breitbart.com recalls:

In 2008, President Obama refused to take corporate cash to fund his inaugural. In 2012, he reversed that decision, having recently accepted a \$250,000 check from [ExxonMobil](#). The fact a sitting president’s former campaign team will be accepting corporate donations, to some, smacks of a double-standard that invites cronyism.

A 501(c)(4) organization by law does not have to disclose their donors, which prompted Messina to target conservative 501(c)(4)s as secret and shadowy groups. In June, Messina wrote of these organizations:

They have a vested interest in being able to spend millions anonymously to influence our elections — many of the corporations and individuals funding their organizations don’t want their agendas to receive scrutiny from the press or the public. We can make sure they don’t get away with hiding these donors — or their agendas. But it’s going to take a lot of us standing up, putting our foot down, and saying ‘Hell no.’

Evidently that stance has changed.



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