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**BACK FROM OHIO, O'NEILL PRAISES OBAMA CAMPAIGN, EXPECTS CLINTON WIN THERE**

Thomas P. O'Neill III, head of a Boston public affairs firm and son of the late speaker of the U.S. House, spent his weekend in the heartland, working to persuade Ohio voters that Barack Obama is the best choice for the Democratic nomination. O'Neill said he was there to "play the son of Tip O'Neill role," touring senior citizen centers packed with Irish- and Italian-blooded voters, and visiting black churches. "I've never seen as many volunteers on one campaign in one place in all my life," he said in a telephone interview. "It was just exhilarating to see what this guy as a candidate has done to the American people." O'Neill said he sided with Obama after friend Sen. Joseph Biden withdrew in January, largely because of Obama's longtime stance against the Iraq war. Despite all the enthusiasm for Obama, he said, "I'd be a little surprised if she did not win Ohio ... But I wouldn't be surprised if he won, either. I will tell you this, there's a real revolution going on out there. It's exciting history." O'Neill said his father has enjoyed "a longer shelf life than I would've thought," that Ohioans recalled the former speaker's defense of Social Security and resistance to President Ronald Reagan's conservative movement. "If you had said to me who would my dad be with today, I think he'd be taken by this kid, to be honest with you." O'Neill said he glimpsed Gov. Deval Patrick, also in Ohio for the weekend, from a distance at a Cleveland airport, but said the two did not speak.