

Advisers for Clinton Plan the Endgame

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By **PATRICK HEALY**

Advisers to Senator [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#) today began plotting a ground game, advertising budgets and a confidence-brimming outreach strategy in hopes of both scoring a big victory in April's Pennsylvania primary and accumulating enough superdelegates over time to even the nomination fight against Senator [Barack Obama](#).

Mr. Obama, who had 11 straight primary and caucus victories in February, has enjoyed momentum lately in picking off superdelegates, the party leaders who have a vote in the nomination. Mrs. Clinton and her advisers now believe that with her victories in Texas and Ohio last night, she can convince superdelegates to stand with her after a Pennsylvania victory.

She also believes that a strong showing in Pennsylvania, which has 188 delegates at stake, could set up a powerful one-two punch two weeks later in the Indiana and North Carolina primaries, which have a combined 218 delegates. Her team believes she has an especially good shot at winning Indiana, where the state's influential Democratic senator, [Evan Bayh](#), a former two-term governor, was one of Mrs. Clinton's earliest supporters.

Clinton advisers acknowledged on Wednesday that the delegate arithmetic still has them at a disadvantage; Mr. Obama has 1,456.5 delegates to Mrs. Clinton's 1,370, and the upcoming primaries will award delegates proportionally to both the winner and the loser. That will have the effect making each candidate inch toward the 2,025 delegates needed for the nomination.

Senator Clinton is also hoping to get an extra boost by adding delegates to her column from Michigan and Florida, and her advisers today have been discussing ways to deal with the conundrum in those states.

The [Democratic Party](#) stripped the two states of their delegates after they moved up their primaries to January, but Mrs. Clinton remained on the ballot in both — as Mr. Obama did in Florida. She won in both Florida and Michigan

and is now seeking to have the delegates counted.

While Clinton advisers have publicly opposed talk of a "do-over" vote in either state, which is possible, some of her advisers said today that they would now be inclined to support such a vote. They believe her strength with Hispanics, women and Jewish voters in Florida, and with union workers and women in Michigan, would be enough to overtake Mr. Obama's advantage with black and young voters in both states.

Mrs. Clinton and her top officials continue to oppose such a do-over. The alternative is waiting until July for the party to consider allowing Florida and Michigan delegates to count at the August convention. But the Clinton advisers who support a new vote said they expected conversations on the issue to intensify in her camp.

In the short term, the campaign announced today that it was dispatching former President [Bill Clinton](#) tomorrow to Wyoming — which holds Democratic caucuses on Saturday — and on Friday to Mississippi, which holds presidential primaries next Tuesday. Mrs. Clinton's upcoming travel plans are still under wraps.

As for other upcoming primaries, Mark Penn, the campaign's chief strategist, predicted today that "a fuller vetting process" of Mr. Obama by the media would heighten concerns among voters about Mr. Obama's candidacy and "open up a number of other states" where Mrs. Clinton could compete intensively for delegates. He spoke on a conference call with reporters.

Campaign advisers said they believed Kentucky and West Virginia could ultimately be in play. They also predicted that Mrs. Clinton would win the final contest on June 7 in Puerto Rico, where 63 delegates will be at stake.

Mrs. Clinton is not simply looking for outright victories in all of the states to come, of course, but is also looking to narrow Mr. Obama's

margin of victory so that even in defeat, she can pick up a number of proportionally allocated delegates in each state.

Harold Ickes, a senior adviser to Senator Clinton, said on the conference call that the Clinton campaign's chief objective was not to sully Mr. Obama's image or record, but to cast a spotlight on lightly examined or unknown aspects of both.

"This is not a question of trying to damage somebody — this is a question of trying to fully understand all the particular aspects of each of the candidates," Mr. Ickes said. "There's not another shoe in her closet to drop. It is clear that too much is yet unknown about Senator Obama."

The Clinton campaign also released a memo stressing confidently that it would have enough money to compete against Mr. Obama this spring and summer, after nearly going broke in early February — at a time when Mr. Obama was raising \$1 million or more a day. Since the Feb. 5 national primary, Mrs. Clinton has also been raising money at a clip of \$1 million a day, mostly online.

"In February, the Clinton campaign raised approximately \$35 million," according to the campaign memo, e-mailed to reporters and supporters. "This deep level of support gives Hillary the resources she needs to compete between now and the convention."