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Hillary's Newest Wingman

PROMINENT BLACK ATTORNEY NAMED CAMPAIGN CO-CHAIR

BY JOYCE JONES

Campaign co-chairs aren't the most important members of a presidential candidate's team, but they do play a very important role. Last week, New York Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton named prominent Washington attorney Weldon Latham as a national co-chair of her campaign. Florida Rep. Alcee Hastings, Maryland Sen. Barbara Mikulski, and Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa also serve as national co-chairs.

"They serve many roles. They help raise money, they're cheerleaders, they talk up the candidates," explains David Bositis, senior political analyst at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. "They lend prestige to a candidate. If they have a [good] reputation, the campaign can take advantage of that."

It can also be safely said that each co-chair is chosen at least in part to target a specific demographic. "Senator Clinton asked me if I'd help outreach to both business and diverse communities and help carry her message and advise on business legal issues. I've been working informally for several weeks and she

wanted to formalize the relationship," says Latham.

Latham is a longtime Washington insider with close ties to both Clintons. A leading expert on discrimination law and corporate diversity, he is a senior partner and chair of the Corporate Diversity Counseling Group at the law firm of Davis Wright Tremaine. He previously served on the Small Business Administration National Advisory Council as general deputy assistant secretary for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. He was also an assistant general counsel for the White House Office of Management and Budget. In addition, he has been an at-large member and trustee of the Democratic National Committee, vice-chair of the Democratic Business Council, and honorary vice-chair of the Clinton/Gore Campaign.

"I have set a goal of helping Sen. Clinton with outreach to elected officials and business leaders from all over the country and trying to enlist the support of as many as we can get to

come on board," Latham explains. "There is stiff competition for every kind of support. I'm pleased that Sen. Barack Obama and Gov. Bill Richardson are running. The Democratic Party has great diversity in our candidates, but at the end of the day, as African Americans and any kind of Americans, we've got to vote to make sure we've got the best qualified and most experienced candidate because after coming off such a dismal administration with Bush, there's not going to be room for errors."

For Latham, that candidate is Clinton. "I chose to support her because she has more experience and a track record of performance both generally and particularly in the African American community. Her track record and former President Bill Clinton's in things they've actually done are substantially better than Sen. Obama. So while it's nice that he's African American, African Americans have become extremely sophisticated and will ultimately vote for people who'll be most effective in looking out for their needs," he says. **BE**

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His areas of practice are Corporate Diversity Counseling, Employment, Corporate, and Government Relations. Mr. Latham is well known for his work in corporate diversity. His numerous activities include: Chair, Deloitte & Touche Diversity Advisory Board/Member, Women's Initiative; Chair, Legal Committee, Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority; and Adjunct Professor, Corporate Diversity Counseling Course, Georgetown University Law Center.

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