



AUGUST 26, 2003

Dean weighs decision to take public financing

By Bob Kinzel

MONTPELIER, VT (2003-08-26)

(Host) Democratic presidential candidate Howard Dean has reached his goal of raising a million dollars during his four-day campaign swing across the country. Dean's surprising success at raising money is causing him to reconsider his pledge to take public funds for his campaign.

VPR's Bob Kinzel reports:

(Kinzel) One of the key elements of Dean's "Sleepless Summer Tour" that took him to eight cities in four days was a plan to see if the campaign could raise a million dollars during the tour.

One of the big surprises of the campaign has been Dean's ability to raise money. In the second quarter of this year his campaign took in more than \$7 million, the most of any of the Democratic candidates. This success at fund raising also presents Dean with a dilemma. Should he take public financing or reject it?

This was an easy decision for Dean to make last winter. He pledged to take public funds because his campaign had much more modest goals for fund raising. Now with money pouring in, the decision is not so clear cut.

If Dean takes public funds - the

most he would qualify for is \$18.5 million dollars - he will be limited to spending roughly \$45 million between now and the Democratic convention next summer. This includes all the money that would be needed to win the nomination. In contrast, President Bush is expected to raise and spend at least \$200 million during the same period and Bush has no primary opposition.

In the 2000 gubernatorial race in Vermont, Dean initially said he would take public funds - a move that would have limited his spending to roughly \$265,000. However Dean ultimately rejected public funds because he felt his GOP opponent, Ruth Dwyer, would spend at least a million dollars to defeat him. Dean says he faces a similar situation now in the presidential race:

(Dean) *"In this race, I have qualified for public financing. Now the question is, can we take on George Bush with \$45 million when he can raise \$200 million? And we're going to have to examine that question very carefully. But we're not going to examine it until we know what kind of fundraising capacity we have."*

(Kinzel) To date, Dean has received many more individual contributions than any other Democratic candidate; he's approaching 100,000

contributors with an average donation of roughly \$80. The Dean campaign is wondering if it can convince a million Americans to send him \$100:

(Dean) *"Our fundraising capacity is literally potentially millions of Americans giving us less than \$100 apiece. That's the only way we can beat George Bush with all his \$2,000 checks but we don't know if we have that kind of fundraising capacity. And we're not going to know that for at least five months."*

(Kinzel) Matt Henshon is a Boston attorney who was a key campaign advisor to former Democratic senator Bill Bradley's presidential campaign in 2000. Henshon says this decision may be one of the toughest that Dean will face in the coming months because a number of his supporters feel very strongly about the campaign finance reform issue:

(Henshon) *"It's a very difficult political balancing choice between the people that he's attracted. And I really feel he's attracted people because he's been a straight shooter and tells people what he believes. Those kind of core supporters may not give him the benefit of switching especially where it seemed like he was going to take public financing back in March. And there may be some downside to him, as far as some of those core people, as far as feeling like he's trimmed his sails a little bit because of political reality."*

(Kinzel) Dean is hoping to raise \$10 million in the third quarter of this year. The reporting period concludes at the end of the month.

For Vermont Public Radio, I'm Bob Kinzel in Montpelier.