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"Clinton ends '08 campaign, endorses Obama"

By Andrew Seaman and Susan Page

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Clinton's campaign

The New York senator and former first lady scored big wins in her bid for the Democratic presidential nomination. Learn more about Hillary Rodham Clinton's campaign using the timeline below.

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Sources: Gannett News Service, USA TODAY research

Photo by Elise Amendola, AP; graphic by Dave Merrill and Juan Thomassie, USA TODAY

Clinton ends '08 campaign, endorses Obama

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Hillary Rodham Clinton waves to supporters before her concession speech at the National Building Museum in Washington.

By Susan Page and Andrew Seaman, USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — Hillary Rodham Clinton, her dreams of becoming the first woman nominated for president by a major party dashed, formally suspended her campaign Saturday and vowed to do all she could to elect rival Barack Obama.

"The way to continue our fight now to accomplish the goals for which we stand is to take our energy, our passion, our strength and do all we can to help elect Barack Obama the next president of the United States," she declared to a wave of cheers and a handful of boos. "Today, as I suspend my campaign. . . I endorse him and throw my full support behind him, and I ask all of you to join me in working as hard for Barack Obama as you have for me."

Clinton's campaign website has been updated to extend support to Obama.

In a half-hour speech, Clinton did what she failed to do in remarks at a rally in New York Tuesday after the final two primaries. This time, she lavished praise on the Illinois senator and urged her followers to join his cause.

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The New York senator stood on a platform at the National Building Museum, one of the capital's grandest indoor spaces, as thousands of supporters and onlookers filled the floor and lined the balconies. A huge American flag was draped behind her.

The crowd greeted Clinton's arrival on stage — joined by her husband, daughter and mother — with an extended and exuberant welcome. But the afternoon also had a sense of the valedictory. In interviews, many paid tribute to her candidacy. Some expressed bitterness toward her opponent.

"I'm just here to say 'thank you' to her," said Tom Scarlett, the editor of an environmental newsletter who volunteered for her campaign. Now, he said, "We are all behind Sen. Obama."

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Miata Sherman, 50, a day-care provider from suburban Rockville, Md., complained that Clinton wasn't "treated very well by the Democratic leadership" during the campaign. "They did not step up to the plate."

Elinor Walker, 48, a lawyer, called the decision a week earlier by the Democrats' Rules and Bylaws Committee to divide the disputed Michigan and Florida delegations between Clinton and Obama "a pretty rotten deal." She said she probably won't vote unless Clinton ends up on the ticket.

Chandra Hardy, an economist from Washington who also attended the speech, said she won't vote for Obama and probably won't vote at all in November. "I don't think he'll win without her," she predicted.

Clinton addressed that sentiment in her remarks, saying no one should concentrate on "if-only" and "what-if."

"Every moment wasted looking back keeps us from moving forward," she told them. "Life is too short, time is too precious and the stakes are too high to dwell on what might have been. We have to work together for what still can be."

Clinton was doing something unfamiliar to the Clinton family. Neither she nor former president Bill Clinton had conceded a nomination battle or general election since he lost a re-election bid for governor of Arkansas in 1980.

He came back two years later to regain the post.

Still ahead for Hillary Clinton: Retiring an estimated \$30 million campaign debt and plotting her political future. She has distanced herself from a petition drive and letter-writing campaign by supporters demanding that Obama choose her as his running mate, though on Tuesday she had spurred feverish speculation by telling New York lawmakers she was "open" to the prospect.

A few hours before Clinton spoke, the Republican National Committee launched a "Clinton vs. Obama" website that chronicled Clinton's past statements questioning Obama's readiness for the presidency as GOP chairman tried to counter the talk of Democratic unity.

"Even as Senator Clinton concedes her candidacy and endorses Barack Obama today, it's clear the Democratic Party is struggling desperately to unify," Duncan said. "Senator Clinton was correct to question Obama's naïveté and inexperience, and those concerns remain for all voters nationwide."

Late Thursday, Clinton and Obama held what was apparently their first extended private conversation since the campaign began, though they have repeatedly encountered one another on debate stages and the Senate floor. Taking cloak-and-dagger steps to avoid coverage by reporters, they met at the home of California Sen. Dianne Feinstein in the posh Spring Valley neighborhood of Washington.

Since he swept the opening Iowa caucuses in January, they had battled to a near draw through more than 50 contests. It ended Tuesday with the South Dakota and Montana contests, which sent him over the 2,118 mark in delegates — the number needed to be nominated at the party's national convention in Denver in August.

He will be the first African-American nominated by a major party for the presidency. She would have been the first woman.

Obama has issued a response to Clinton and he's also put a "Thank you, Senator Clinton" page at his website, complete with opportunity to donate money to Clinton, who has a \$30 million campaign debt.

On Saturday, Clinton spoke at length about the groundbreaking nature of her candidacy, saying that with the 18 million votes she received through the primary season represented "about 18 million cracks" in the glass ceiling for the presidency, "and the light is shining through like never before."