

# Obama Questions Clinton on Free Trade

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PITTSBURGH — Democratic Sen. Barack Obama on Monday questioned rival Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton's opposition to free trade agreements that some voters contend have eliminated thousands of U.S. jobs and mocked her weekend visit to an Indiana bar as pandering to the working class.

"Around election time, the candidates can't do enough for you. They'll promise you anything, give you a long list of proposals and even come around, with TV crews in tow, to throw back a shot and a beer," Obama told a meeting of the Alliance for American Manufacturing.

Clinton did just that at a stop Saturday at Bronko's restaurant in Crown Point, Ind.

The two presidential candidates continued to hammer each other Monday after a weekend of criticism stemming from Obama's comment that some small-town voters are bitter over their economic circumstances and "cling to guns and religion" as a result. Obama uttered the words at a private fundraiser in San Francisco last week and Clinton has seized on them in seeking the edge in Pennsylvania, which holds its primary April 22.

Obama also chided Clinton over NAFTA and the Colombian trade deal. Clinton has criticized NAFTA, which was passed under her husband's watch. She opposes the Colombian trade deal even though former President Clinton supports it and her top campaign strategist, Mark Penn, met with Colombian officials to help push for its passage. Penn has since been demoted.

"Here's what you can't do. You can't spend the better part of two decades campaigning for NAFTA and PNTR for China, and then come here to Pennsylvania, and tell the steelworkers you've been with them all along," Obama said. "You can't say you are opposed to the Colombia Trade deal, while your key strategist is working for the Colombian government to get the deal passed."

In response, Clinton spokesman Phil Singer said, "Senator Obama's speeches won't hide his condescending views of Americans living in small towns."

Clinton was scheduled to address the gathering later Monday. Both candidates are hoping to secure the endorsement of the influential United Steelworkers union, which backed Democrat John Edwards before he dropped out of the race. Steelworkers president Leo Gerard introduced Obama to the crowd, saying, "We're tired, we're frustrated, we're angry and we need somebody who's going to stand up for fair trade."

Campaigning Sunday in Pennsylvania, Clinton derided Obama's comments about small-town voters as "elitist and divisive" and suggested they could doom Democrats' chances for recapturing the White House in November if Obama were the nominee.

At a union hall outside Harrisburg, Obama said he'd expected blowback from GOP nominee-in-waiting John McCain but said he'd been "a little disappointed" to be criticized by Clinton. "Shame on her," he said.

Laughing, the Illinois senator noted Clinton seemed much more interested in guns since he made his comments than she had been in the past. On Saturday, the former first lady reminisced about learning to shoot on summer vacations in Scranton, where her father grew up.

"She is running around talking about how this is an insult to sportsmen, how she values the Second Amendment. She's talking like she's Annie Oakley," Obama said.

Clinton has told campaign audiences that she supports the rights of hunters. She's also said she once shot a duck in Arkansas, where she served as first lady.

Clinton, who is trailing Obama in the popular vote and pledged delegates, has pounded Obama since audio from his San Francisco appearance was posted on The Huffington Post Web site. She hoped the comments might give her a new opening to court working-class Democrats less than 10 days before the Pennsylvania primary, which she needs win to keep her campaign going.

At the San Francisco fundraiser, Obama tried to explain his troubles in winning over some blue-collar voters, saying they have become frustrated with economic conditions: "It's not surprising, then, they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations."

In Scranton on Sunday, Clinton said Obama's words would probably alienate voters in Pennsylvania and other states holding primaries in the coming weeks. Indiana and North Carolina vote on May 6.

"How does he see people here in this neighborhood, throughout Pennsylvania, Indiana, North Carolina, other places in our country?" she asked during an informal news conference. "I think that's what people are looking for, some explanation, and he has simply not provided one."

*Associated Press Writer Kimberly Hefling in Scranton, Pa., contributed to this report.*