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Obama: Beware 'you're on your own' society

By Susan Page, USA TODAY

GREENSBORO, N.C. — Presidential candidate Barack Obama, largely ignoring his Democratic rival for now, ridiculed likely Republican nominee John McCain on Wednesday for offering "not one single idea" to help hard-pressed homeowners facing foreclosure.

"George Bush called this the ownership society, but what he really meant was 'you're-on-your-own' society," Obama told a town hall meeting here, tying McCain to a president whose popularity is low. "John McCain apparently wants to continue this."

The Illinois senator touched on some themes he's likely to strike today at 9:15 a.m. ET in what his campaign bills as a major economic address, at New York's Cooper Union.

Tuesday, McCain warned that some proposals for government intervention in the housing crisis would rescue banks and borrowers who acted irresponsibly.

Campaigning in California on Wednesday, McCain told reporters "we may have to do more" to help homeowners. "But raise taxes as Sen. Obama wants to do, or some kind of massive bailout that is a needless expenditure of taxpayer dollars, is obviously something that I don't support," he said.

Still, McCain said he was open to solutions beyond his party's standard prescriptions, saying, "I will not allow dogma to override common sense."

At Obama's town hall in North Carolina, which will hold its primary May 6, economic questions dominated — about the cost of college tuition and the availability of health care coverage. He also fielded a question about what role religion played in his life.

In response, the Illinois senator spoke at length about his faith and then raised an issue the questioner hadn't: controversial comments by his former pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, about racism in America.

Wright's comments have been targeted because they "spoke to some of the racial divisions we have in this country," Obama said, saying the furor was a "distraction" from larger issues on Iraq and the economy.

Meanwhile, former president Bill Clinton rejected the notion that Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton might back away from the presidential race to prevent weakening the party's prospects in November.

"Let's just saddle up and have an argument," Clinton said in Parkersburg, W.Va. "What's wrong with that?"

Contributing: Associated Press

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