

www.nationaljournal.com

At Carly Fiorina's Iowa Campaign Rally, Her Super PAC Does the Heavy Lifting

“We publicize every event on my schedule. And anyone can come,” Fiorina said.

S.V. Dáté

@SVDATE

🕒 September 25, 2015

DAVENPORT, Iowa—As Republican presidential hopeful Carly Fiorina drew an eager crowd of 600 Friday morning, her Carly for President campaign brought with it no signs, no lapel stickers, no fliers—and it didn't collect a single phone number or email address.

Lucky for her, an independent super PAC, CARLY for America, happened to be there doing all of those things.

“We publicize every event on my schedule. And anyone can come,” Fiorina told reporters afterward, explaining the super PAC's serendipitous presence.

She added that she is unconcerned that her campaign is not gathering contact information for potential caucus-goers—data that most campaigns consider invaluable as they prepare for the coming primary season.

“What you see happening is a super PAC is organizing people. We are not coordinating with them. We are not asking them to. I don't know what they're doing. They don't tell us what they're doing,” she said.

That strategy saves her campaign's precious "hard" dollars that can only be collected from individuals, \$2,700 at a time. Super PACs can accept contributions, from individuals or corporations, of unlimited size. The super PAC supporting Fiorina received nearly half of its \$3.5 million in donations in the first half of the year from a single donor, former Univision CEO Jerry Perenchio.

Exactly how much money the super PAC's work is saving Fiorina is unclear. In its June 30 filing, CARLY for America's only listed "independent expenditures"—the only thing such a committee can legally do—were for online ads boosting Fiorina. There was no breakdown of how much of the super PAC's staff time and campaign material has been used for supporting Fiorina campaign events or for organizing potential voters.

The campaigns of Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker and former Texas Gov. Rick Perry ended because they ran out of money for basic operations—even as super PACs supporting them remained flush with millions of dollars. None of those super PACs staffed its candidate's events or organized voter lists.

Both of these activities, though, were on full display Friday morning at St. Ambrose University, which was hosting a Fiorina appearance.

In the lobby of the building Fiorina would appear, a super PAC staffer held a super PAC-printed sign and pointed new arrivals toward the stairs.

"Good morning. Are you here to see Carly? It's on the third floor," he said, declining to give his name because, he said, he was not authorized to speak to the press.

Upstairs, the super PAC had filled a table top with its signs, fliers, and pamphlets. Another staffer passed out super PAC stickers, while a third offered a clipboard to those filing into the auditorium: "Would you guys like to sign up to find out when she's next in the area?"

Through all of this there, not a single piece of literature from Fiorina's actual campaign. The first campaign staffer did not arrive until a half-hour before the scheduled start time.

Attendee Nancy Malli learned about Fiorina's appearance when a super PAC staffer, Andrea Raffle, came to her Republican Women of Clinton County meeting last week. Malli assumed Raffle was a campaign aide, just as her husband assumed the "CARLY" on the

sign he held and the sticker on his shirt referred to Fiorina's first name, rather than "Conservative, Authentic, Responsive Leadership for You," because of Federal Election Commission rules designed to distinguish super PACs from campaign committees.

Both laughed at the acronym, but said it made little difference to them. "I really like her policies. I like her ideas," Dennis Malli said.

At St. Ambrose University, Fiorina largely stuck to her standard stump speech—attacking Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton and President Obama, and promising to shut down Planned Parenthood and demand a new nuclear deal from Iran.

In response to critical news coverage of her tumultuous leadership of Hewlett-Packard a decade ago, Fiorina defended her time there and blamed her firing on a boardroom squabble. "I will run on that record all day long," she said.

When she wrapped up, it was the super PAC again interacting with attendees. "Thank you for coming," Raffle told audience members, once more offering her signup clipboard as they left.