

More clergy dollars going to Democrats: Obama the top recipient

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Clergy and staffers of religious organizations are giving more to Democratic campaigns this year, marking a shift from four years ago when Republicans had the advantage.

Contributions to candidates, parties and committees from clergy and other individuals professionally affiliated with religious groups totaled \$655,250 in the period surveyed, reports the Center for Responsive Politics, a nonpartisan group that tracks campaign donations.

Fifty-six percent of that money went to Democrats, according to the Washington-based center's analysis of Federal Election Commission data on giving in the first three quarters of 2007.

By contrast, at the same point in 2003, clergy and religious staffers had given a total of \$461,600 in contributions to candidates, parties and committees, with 59 percent going to Republicans.

Senator Barack Obama (D., Ill.) was the top recipient of these funds among all presidential candidates at the end of the third quarter of 2007, with \$109,850.

Former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney was the top Republican recipient, with \$39,350. Former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee received the third highest Republican contributions from this category of donors, with \$22,600 (behind Kansas senator Sam Brownback, who has dropped out of the race).

Massie Ritsch, a spokesperson for the nonpartisan research center, said there has been a shift in giving among contributors from a range of categories, with more Democratic donations.

"That's just the trend that you see all over," he said. "They've at least become more Democratic in their giving . . . since the last election. The Democratic presidential candidates have raised far more money than the Republican candidates." *-Religion*

