

In April, Kerry's Fundraising Nearly Doubled Bush's

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Sen. John F. Kerry's fundraising receipts surged strongly ahead of President Bush's last month, with the presumptive Democratic nominee pulling in almost twice what the president raised.

At the same time, Bush's campaign is spending money at an unprecedented rate. In part because of a \$50 million ad blitz in March and early April, Bush has spent nearly \$130 million on his reelection effort, a record amount, according to reports that the campaign filed yesterday with the Federal Election Commission. In April alone, his campaign spent almost \$31 million to help counteract a series of negative news reports that have hurt the president's standing in the polls.

Kerry's fundraising haul of \$30 million in April -- compared with the Bush campaign's \$15.6 million -- marked the second consecutive month in which the Massachusetts senator's receipts have exceeded the president's, according to the two campaigns. Over the past two months, Kerry has attracted about \$30 million more than Bush. The president did much of his fundraising last year and has stopped attending events to raise more for his campaign.

Bush still has a big advantage over Kerry in cash on hand -- about \$71.6 million at the end of April, compared with Kerry's \$28 million. But several independent observers say two factors could work in Kerry's favor: the accelerated pace of his fundraising and a likely decline in spending by the president over the next few months. Kerry's success in attracting donations has, in any case, obliterated the conventional wisdom of just a few months ago that the president would use his enormous financial strength to clobber his opponent with advertising, as President Bill Clinton did in 1996 against Robert J. Dole and as Bush did in 2000 against a cash-strapped Al Gore.

"Kerry is now in a position to be competitive with [the president] through the convention," when both candidates will be limited to \$75 million in federal campaign funds, said Anthony Corrado, a campaign finance expert at the Brookings Institution. "The issue was, could Kerry raise the money he needed to get his message out and campaign aggressively through the summer? He's done that. This is a completely different race from the last two because of his fundraising success."

In all, Kerry raised \$115 million through April 30, breaking Bush's record for a challenger, his campaign said. The Bush campaign said yesterday that it has raised \$200 million since last year, drawing contributions from slightly more than 1 million donors, the first time a campaign has achieved such a milestone.

The two candidates have more than doubled the money Bush and Gore raised before their conventions.

In addition to mounting a competitive advertising campaign, Kerry appears to have the resources to begin building a campaign staff in the 17 or so "battleground" states that both campaigns consider crucial to their election strategy. This may prove to be another significant difference for Kerry over Gore, who was forced to borrow \$2 million against his federal election grant to assemble a small staff in several states in midsummer of 2000.

Bush's April fundraising total of \$15.6 million was impressive by almost any measure except his haul of \$26 million in March. The April total came from 183,400 supporters, compared with nearly

200,000 who gave in March. Corrado said Bush continues to show impressive financial strength, but the administration's problems in Iraq and economic issues may have reduced some of the enthusiasm in his donor base.

Apart from spending \$21 million on ads in April, Bush has assembled an expensive campaign apparatus, with relatively high overhead costs. Among other expenditures last month, the campaign spent \$1.16 million on salaries, \$3.6 million on postage and printing, and millions more on such miscellaneous items as parking (\$4,178).

"If he keeps this up, he won't last until September 1," when he'll receive his federal funds for the general election, said Michael Malbin, executive director of the Campaign Finance Institute in Washington. "Obviously, he won't keep this up."

But Bush is unlikely to run out of money before the Republican convention at the end of August. His campaign could maintain its current spending pace over the next four months simply by using its cash on hand and by raising an average of about \$12.5 million a month -- a level well below its monthly average this year. What's more, its spending is likely to tail off, at least briefly, during the Democratic convention in July and the Olympics in August.

Bush has received about one-quarter of his donations from four states -- his home state of Texas, followed by California, Florida and New York, according to an analysis by the Associated Press.

Kerry's money-raising success has come despite parallel fundraising efforts by independent groups allied with the Democratic Party. These "527" organizations (so named because of the tax code they are organized under) were formed in large part because of fears that the Democratic candidate would be vastly outspent by Bush.