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In Chicago for fundraisers, Obama speaks about Fort Hood incident

By Rick Pearson

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President Barack Obama stopped for a few hours in his hometown today, and what was supposed to be a quick visit for two Democratic fundraisers also included the president's first opportunity to express concern over the shootings at Fort Hood.

"We're heartbroken that something like this might have happened again," Obama told reporters at the site of his first fundraiser, Chicago Cut Steakhouse.

While cautioning that the Texas shooting situation was "fluid right now," the president said: "Obviously, this reopens the pain of what happened at Fort Hood five years ago."

At his second fundraiser, Obama also mentioned Fort Hood. "We're monitoring the situation carefully," he said.

Obama's aim in visiting his hometown was to rally Democrats in blue-state Illinois to support a mid-term ticket with fall races from U.S. Senate and governor on down to Congress and the legislature. He was in the city a little more than five hours, lifting off from O'Hare International Airport about 9:20 p.m.

The president arrived at O'Hare shortly after 4 p.m. and was welcomed by Gov. Pat Quinn. The greeting was something of a rare sight nationally among re-election-seeking Democrats who may be uncertain whether concerns over the president's signature health care act and his fluctuating popularity will hinder their bids for office.

Quinn faces an intense and expensive challenge from Republican venture capitalist Bruce Rauner. The governor needs a significant turnout from Democrats, particularly African-American voters loyal to the president, to fuel his re-election.

With onlookers watching the presidential motorcade travel along a closed Lake Shore Drive and onto Grand Avenue, Obama began the evening at a closed-press fundraising event at the steakhouse at 300 N. LaSalle St. A total of 25 people, paying up to \$32,400 per person, attending a roundtable benefitting the Democratic National Committee hosted by Richard Price, chairman and CEO of Mesirow Financial.

Afterward, Obama traveled to the Lincoln Park home of donors Craig Freedman and Grace Tsao-Wu for a dinner benefitting the DNC. A DNC official said 55 people were scheduled to attend the dinner, donating up to \$10,000 per person.

In his remarks, Obama noted Quinn's attendance and called him the "outstanding governor of the great state of Illinois."

Also attending were White House adviser Valerie Jarrett and Henry Munoz of San Antonio, the finance chair of the DNC and the architect of Obama's fundraising strategy in the Latino community.

The president, who campaigned for a hike in the federal minimum wage during a stop in Ann Arbor, Mich., earlier today, also addressed the issue of income inequity while in Chicago.

Obama said the premise of the country has been that "we grow best when our growth is broad-based, when everybody's got a shot."

"One of the great things about Chicago is, although folks usually didn't come here right at first ... this is a city of immigrants and the story of Chicago has been starting off with nothing and building something," he said.

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